

MIT endowment rises 4.8% to \$24.6 billion in 2024 fiscal year

By Matthew Barnett and Alex Tang

MIT reported a gain in net assets for the 2024 fiscal year (FY) ending on June 30th, 2024. According to the Report of the Treasurer, the Institute's endowment saw a 4.8% increase, rising to \$24.6 billion from the previous year's valuation at \$23.5 billion. This marks the first increase in MIT's endowment since its historic growth in 2021 and reverses the losses in the 2023 fiscal year.

The numbers

In the report, Executive Vice President and Treasurer Glen Shor attributes the increase to "positive net return[s] on pooled endowment investments and new donor-endowed gifts."

According to the report, MIT's overall net assets increased to \$33.6 billion, a 4.3% increase from the year prior. The institute's primary investment pool, termed

Pool A by Shor, also jumped 8.9%.

Philanthropic contributions totaled \$598.7 million in FY 2024, a figure "in line with the prior five-year average," according to Shor. In comparison to FY 2023, such contributions increased by 8.2% despite "a year of controversy on campuses across the nation spurred by world events." Net assets without donor restrictions climbed nearly \$800 million fueled mainly by "positive net returns on quasi-endowed and non-endowed pooled investment and positive net results."

MIT ended the fiscal year with a net result (that is, operating revenue minus operating expenses) of \$484.7 million, a 52.8% increase from FY 2023. This jump was buttressed mainly by "sponsored support" which increased \$261.9 million (12.7 percent) in FY 2024. The increase was also supported by a \$19.0 million (4.6 percent) increase in tuition revenue for undergraduate and graduate programs.

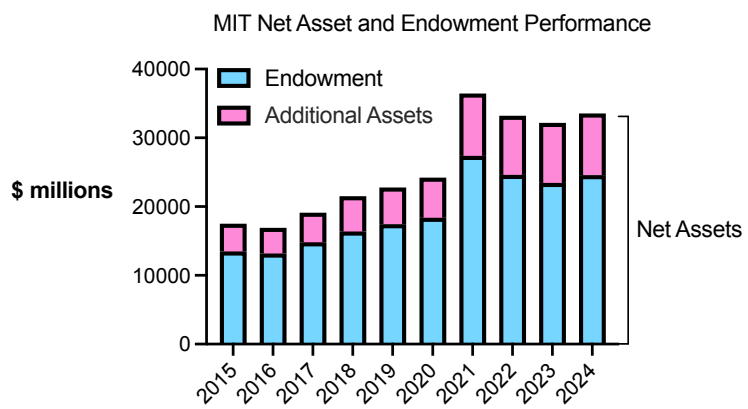
Updates on Capital Projects

The Report also included a review of the institute's ongoing and completed Capital Projects.

In the housing sector, Shor highlighted the completion of Graduate Junction in West Campus, which added close to 676 new beds to MIT's graduate housing stock. Shor also noted the current renovation of the East Campus undergraduate residence halls, and the renovations slated for McCormick Hall beginning in Summer 2025.

Other projects Shor highlighted include the ongoing work to the historic Metropolitan Warehouse building, which will serve as the future home of the School of Architecture and Planning and the MIT Morningside Academy for Design when completed.

Shor also used the report to reemphasize MIT's commitment to The Climate Project, an initiative that has been one of the cornerstones of MIT President Sally Kornbluth since she assumed the



ALEX TANG - THE TECH

In a reversal of recent losses, MIT's endowment rose 4.8% in FY 2024, with total assets climbing 4.3%.

Presidency. Shor stated that "work is underway on our campus to dramatically reduce MIT's carbon footprint," with further evaluations to campus infrastructure with the intention of powering the campus "with zero carbon emissions by 2050 utilizing cleaner energy sources."

Shor concluded his report by stating that he "remains extremely grateful to MIT's alumni and friends for their support and generosity, and to our entire community for its contributions to the thoughtful stewardship of the Institute's financial assets."

Coalition for Palestine continues regular protests as numerous arrests made

The Coalition alleges police brutality after five individuals arrested at Oct. 7 and Oct. 22 protests

By Alex Tang, Vivian Hir, and Alor Sahoo

EDITORS

In the fall of 2024, the Coalition for Palestine (C4P) has held weekly protests on Mondays in front of Lobby 7. Though these street-side protests themselves are smaller in scale compared to the spring, a number of arrests have been made without comment from the MIT administration in messages previously broadcasted to the wider Institute community.

Amidst a changing landscape of the Israel-Hamas War and administration regulation on the time and place of protest, the C4P remains adamant in its messaging of severing ties between the Institute and Israeli entities involved in the conflict.

Arrests of protesters on Oct. 7 and Oct. 22

The Coalition for Palestine (C4P) organized a rally on Oct. 7, marking exactly one year since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas War: it was also intended to be the launching of their termed "MIT Arms Embargo" campaign focusing on dismantling ties between the Institute's research affiliations with weapons deployed in the conflict.

The rally followed a route from the Ragon Institute on Main Street to Stata Center on Vassar Street. According to MIT C4P member Aaliya Hussain '25, this seemingly unusual route had a specific purpose: to highlight the "ties between the space [the protesters walked through] and the tech-

nology [developed next to those spaces]." Hussain is also an active member of MIT Divest, a student organization that has endorsed the MIT Undergraduate Association (UA) referendum to call for a ceasefire in Gaza and demand that MIT cut research ties with the Israeli military.

At the rally, tens of policemen from MIT Police and Cambridge Police arrested three protestors, one of whom was a MIT graduate student and two others not affiliated with MIT. According to the Council Against Apartheid (CAA), the police "used violence [sic] force," physically dragging them to the street and piling "up on top of each person."

Hussain directly witnessed these arrests and found the experience to be horrifying, confirming that there were acts of police brutality and abuse of force. "People were basically thrown onto the street, and multiple officers were putting down one person," Hussain said. "It was genuinely traumatic to witness."

The CAA asserts that these arrests targeted people of color, including the MIT graduate student, who is Black. Court proceedings are ongoing for the arrested.

More recently, MIT Police organized a protest on Tuesday, Oct. 22 calling for Professor Daniela Rus, a Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and other principal investigators to reject "Israeli military [research] funding."

Fall Protests, Page 2

Institute Jewish, Israeli community hold October 7 memorial service and display

The display was held on Kresge Oval from Oct. 7 to Oct. 11 and a memorial service was held on Oct. 7



KATE LU - THE TECH

A memorial display on Kresge Oval put up by MIT Israel Alliance commemorates anniversary of October 7th attack on Israel, Tuesday, Oct. 8.

By Alex Tang, Vivian Hir, and Alor Sahoo

EDITORS

From October 7 to October 11, a memorial display was held on Kresge Oval to remember the lives lost and hostages taken in the October 7th Hamas-led attack. Titled 10/373, the display was organized by Chabad at MIT, MIT Hillel, and the MIT Israel Alliance (MITIA).

The installation featured various art pieces from the MIT Jewish community that not only focused on loss and grief, but also resilience and hope. In addition to the Kresge Oval display, a memorial service was held in the Kresge Little Theatre on October 7th.

The memorial display

Planning for the display began in early September. MITIA, Chabad, and Hillel came together to organize committees for the memorial display and service. Early on, the planning committee decided that the display should convey the devastation that October 7th had on the Jewish community. "It was really important that the display would not be political," Bechhofer said. "[The memorial] would just focus on themes of human suffering, crisis, and then resilience and rebuilding."

After much discussion, the committee identified three main themes for the memorial display:

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The Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard lays off 87 employees

In an Oct 10 email to members of the Broad Institute community, Todd Golub, the Broad's director, announced the layoff of 87 employees, 75 of whom were part of the Data Sciences Platform and IT departments.

The layoffs coincide with the end of a partnership with Microsoft that resulted in Terra, a computational platform for researchers to access data and conduct biomedical analyses. Terra was built by the Data Science Platform team through a partnership with Microsoft and Verily which began in 2021.

"The rapid pace of technological and scientific change requires us to retool to stay ahead of the field," Golub wrote. The Broad is home to almost 3,000 employees and affiliated personnel; the Data Science Platform department is made up of around 300 software engineers and computational biologists.

Earlier in May, Stacey Gabriel, Executive Vice President of Platforms and Scientific Execution at the Broad, announced the elimination of 16 roles in the Center for the Development of Therapeutics

— Karie Shen

IN SHORT

Oct 28. Second quarter Physical Education and Wellness classes begin.

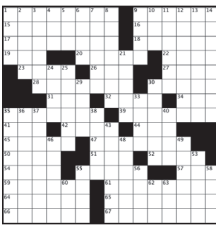
Nov 11. Veterans Day. No classes.

Nov 20. Drop Date. This is the final day to cancel full-term subjects from registration.

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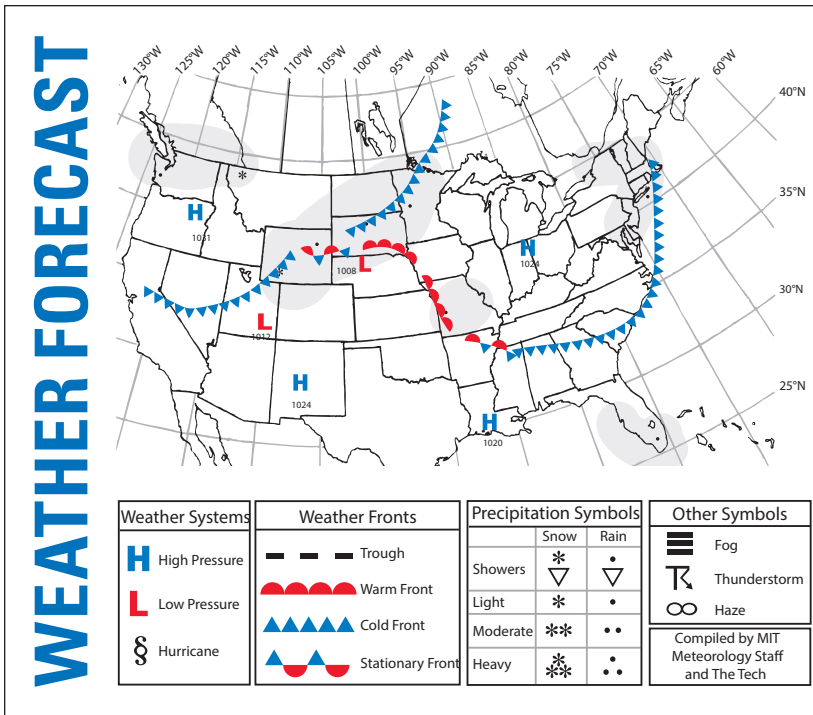
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Cooling down as October comes to a close

By Lou Lahn

The weather is cooling down from our warm streak but continues to be pretty amiable into this weekend. The trees are starting to turn, and the leaves are starting to fall, make sure to get outside while you still can and enjoy that autumn beauty! A walk along the Charles River esplanade is the perfect opportunity to see some fall foliage close to home. Additionally, make sure to check out Halloween events coming up on campus and partake in the fun!

OCTOBER 24 SITUATION FOR NOON (ET)

Extended Forecast

Today: Mostly sunny, with a small chance of precipitation. High around 63°F (17°C). North winds around 8-14 mph.

Tonight: Mostly clear. Low around 45°F (7°C). North winds around 11 to 14 mph.

Friday: Sunny. High around 57°F (14°C). Northwest winds 7-10 mph.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy. Low around 47°F (8°C). Southwest winds around 7 to 10 mph.

Saturday: Mostly sunny. High near 62°F (17°C) and low near 42°F (5°C). Southwest winds 10 to 14 mph.

Sunday: Sunny. High near 52°F (11°F) and low near 38°F (3°C). Northwest winds 11 to 15 mph.

Arrests made at pro-Palestinian protests across October

Fall Protests, from Page 1

According to the CAA, Dr. Rus’ robotics research has received funding from Israel’s Ministry of Defense for its potential military drone applications. In response, protesters entered the CSAIL lab space on the third floor of the Gates Tower in Stata Center, picketing for 20 minutes and handing out flyers. MIT Police arrested two and several more were detained.

Recent developments in the Coalition

On Sept. 13, the MIT administration ended the MISTI-Israel Lockheed Martin Seed Fund, a program which according to the Institute, “have supported faculty collaborations and international experiences for students in various countries, including Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, and Switzerland.” The fund was one initiative that the C4P targeted as part of their divestment efforts in the 2023-2024 academic year.

The MIT Coalition for Palestine plans to continue their divestment campaign of pressuring MIT to cut ties with certain companies and end funding from Israel’s Ministry of Defense. These companies include Elbit Systems, an Israeli defense company, and Maersk, a global logistics company that ships cargo to Israel. Elbit Systems is a member of MIT’s Industrial Liaison Program (ILP), a membership program that provides compa-

nies with access to MIT’s resources. Maersk signed an agreement with the MIT Center for Transportation Logistics (CTL) in 2021; MIT CTL does research on supply chain logistics and collaborates with logistics companies. “Those certainly are ties that we’re going after,” Hussain said. “What makes it [MIT] very unique is that we have such direct ties to the actual weaponry that is being used in these attacks.”

Effects of new campus regulations on the Coalition

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the MIT administration laid out new policies for campus protests and demonstrations. Called “Guidelines for Free Expression at Campus Events, Vigils, Protests, and Demonstrations,” these new policies not only specified where demonstrations can take place, but also laid out rules in which demonstrations had to be registered at “least three business days in advance” with the administration. On Feb. 13, the MIT Coalition Against Apartheid (CAA) was temporarily suspended for violating the demonstration guidelines after holding a rally in Lobby 7 without a prior reservation. There have been claims of a permanent suspension, but they were not officially confirmed at the time of this writing.

These new changes were also reflected in the new 2023-2024 Committee on Discipline (COD) annual report: Institute Expectations

was created as a new category for alleged policy violations. According to the report, there were 52 counts of violations under Institute Expectations in the 2023-2024 academic year. Disorderly conduct also had 52 counts.

Hussain believes that the MIT’s administration portrayal of the new campus regulations to be contradictory. “The narrative that the MIT administration has tried and honestly failed to maintain is that protest rules have always existed,” Hussain said. “That is what they claim.” In terms of the violations under Institute Expectations, Hussain criticized the disproportionate impact the COD proceedings had on students of color, saying that “out of the 52 people, 45 were students of color.” The demographic breakdown of the students was actually not disclosed within the report.

Hussain highlighted that the discipline of students in the MIT CAA dates back to 1986—MIT Police raided the shantytown encampment MIT CAA students built to protest MIT for not divesting from South Africa. She compared this event to the raid of the Palestine encampment on May 10.

Thoughts on the 2024 election and the Israel-Hamas war

In regards to the Coalition’s views on the 2024 election, Hussain described that people within the group have different views on the

election and acknowledged that “electoral politics are complicated.” Although Hussain believes that the 2024 election is important, she said that the election is not a main topic of conversation in the Coalition because the group’s main focus is on the ongoing war in Palestine. “Frankly, do you have the bandwidth to care about an election happening in two to three weeks when in the immediate term you see children burning alive?” Hussain raised.

Hussain clarified that she does not dismiss the 2024 election’s importance. “I’m saying that there’s a genocide happening in Gaza right now, and I think that has to be factored into everything.”

Reflections on MIT as an institution

In regards to MIT’s role as an institution, Hussain expressed disappointment and frustration, stating that “MIT has failed morally on so many different grounds.” She focused on two main points: MIT’s direct ties with Israel and MIT’s mistreatment of students. Hussain condemned MIT for its use of force on students, citing the arrests of protesters outside the Stata Center parking garage on May 9. “There is no acknowledgment of the violence and racism. And that is disgusting beyond words,” Hussain said. “MIT has lacked any sort of moral restraint on Palestine and also on its own grounds.”

Previewing November for MIT Fall Sports

By Matthew Barnett

MIT’s Fall athletic teams are preparing for the home stretch of their seasons as the semester nears its end. Many teams are vying for post-season spots, while others are longing for the relief of the offseason. If you have not been keeping track of our Division III NCAA teams this fall, here is a recap of how they’ve been doing (as of the time of publication):

Football

MIT’s Football Team is currently 2-4 (0-4 conference). They are on a four game losing streak, and have been shut out in their two most recent games. During this span, they have been outscored 109 to 25. They have three more games remaining on their schedule, going up against Maritime College (10/26), Norwich University (11/9), and WPI (11/16).

Field Hockey

MIT Field Hockey is currently 12-3 (7-0 conference). They are riding an eight game winning streak, and have posted a +35 point differential over that span. They have two games remaining before the NEWMAC Championship Tournament. A major test awaits them as they face No. 7 Babson on 10/26, as MIT is 0-2 against ranked teams this year.

Men’s Soccer

MIT’s Men’s Soccer is currently 7-7-1 (2-2-1 conference). After starting 4-1, MIT dropped three straight games to fall to 4-4. Since then, they have been hovering around the 0.500 mark. They have three games remaining before the NEWMAC Championship Tournament.

Women’s Soccer

MIT WSOC is currently 13-1-1

(7-0-0 conference). They are currently ranked No. 5 in the nation (for D-III schools) by the United Soccer Coaches Poll. Since their upset to No. 22 Tufts on 9/25, they have won seven straight. They have four games remaining before the NEWMAC Championship Tournament, three of which are at home.

Volleyball

MIT’s Women’s Volleyball Team is currently undefeated, sitting at 21-0 (8-0 conference). They are ranked No. 4 in the nation (among D-III schools) by the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA). At the NYU Showdown in September, they notably took down No. 2 Johns Hopkins 3-1, and No. 11 NYU 3-0. They have 8 games remaining before the NEWMAC Championship Tournament, 5 of which are at home.

SPORTS BLITZ

Friday, October 4th:

- Women’s Cross Country placed 1st at NCAA DIII Pre-Nationals
- Men’s Cross Country placed 4th at NCAA DIII Pre-Nationals

Saturday, October 5th:

- Sailing placed 10th at Open ACC Round 1B and 6th at Stu Nelson Trophy
- Women’s Openweight and Lightweight Crew participated in the Quinsigamond Snake Regatta
- Men’s Lightweight Crew participated in the Quinsigamond Snake Regatta
- Rifle lost to the University of Rhode Island 4413–4422
- Rifle defeated to the United States Coast Guard 4413–3616
- Women’s Cross Country participated in the Bates College Invitational
- Men’s Cross Country participated in the Bates College Invitational
- Football lost to the United States Coast Guard 19–21
- Women’s Volleyball defeated Mount Holyoke College 3–0
- Field Hockey defeated Wheaton College 6–0
- Men’s Soccer defeated Clark University 3–2
- Women’s Soccer defeated Clark University 2–1
- Men’s Water Polo lost to Princeton University 5–20

Sunday, October 6th:

- Men’s Water Polo lost to LIU 12–15
- Men’s Water Polo lost to Iona University 14–19

Tuesday, October 8th:

- Field Hockey defeated Wellesley College 3–2
- Women’s Volleyball defeated Emerson College 3–0
- Men’s Soccer lost to Brandeis University 1–4

Wednesday, October 9th:

- Women’s Soccer defeated Wheaton College 2–0

Saturday, October 12th:

- Sailing placed 5th at Dartmouth, 12th at Navy, and 9th at Boston College
- Men’s Heavyweight Crew placed 17th, 48th, 95th at Head of the Kevin
- Men’s Tennis participated in Skidmore Open
- Women’s Tennis participated in NEWITT
- Men’s Water Polo lost to Brown University 8–13
- Football lost to the United States Merchant Marine Academy 0–21
- Men’s Soccer tied Springfield College 2–2
- Field Hockey defeated WPI 3–1
- Women’s Soccer defeated Springfield College 2–0

Sunday, October 13th:

- Men’s Soccer defeated Williams College 1–0
- Men’s Water Polo lost to Harvard University 9–21

Tuesday, October 15th:

- Women’s Volleyball defeated Wellesley College 3–0

Wednesday, October 16th:

- Women’s Soccer defeated the United States Coast Guard Academy 1–0
- Field Hockey defeated Gordon College 10–0

Saturday, October 19th:

- Sailing placed in 11th at Yale, 6th at MIT, and 5th at Connecticut College
- Rifle lost to Wofford College 4339–4494
- Women’s Cross Country placed 1st and 2nd in the Connecticut College Invitational
- Men’s Cross Country placed 7th and 1st in the Connecticut College Invitational
- Women’s Volleyball defeated WPI 3–1
- Men’s Water Polo defeated Johns Hopkins University 14–12
- Football lost to Springfield College 0–48
- Women’s Soccer defeated Salve Regina 6–1
- Women’s Openweight Crew placed 25th, 4th, and 16th the Head of the Charles
- Women’s Lightweight Crew placed 17th in the Head of the Charles
- Men’s Heavyweight Crew placed 28th in the Head of the Charles
- Men’s Lightweight Crew placed 18th in the Head of the Charles
- Men’s Soccer defeated Emerson College 2–1
- Men’s Water Polo defeated Washington and Jefferson College 22–11
- Field Hockey defeated Clark University 5–0
- Women’s Volleyball defeated Eastern University 3–0

Sunday, October 20th:

- Men’s Water Polo defeated Connecticut College 16–7
- Women’s Lightweight Crew placed 7th and 6th in the Head of the Charles
- Men’s Heavyweight Crew placed 2nd and 28th in the Head of the Charles
- Men’s Lightweight Crew placed 8th in the Head of the Charles

Tuesday, October 22nd:

- Women’s Volleyball defeated Wheaton College 3–0
- Field Hockey defeated Mount Holyoke College 7–1

Wednesday, October 23rd:

- Women’s Soccer shutout Babson College 4–0

Upcoming Sports Events

FRIDAY 25

Women’s Swimming and Diving
vs Harvard University
6:30 p.m.

Women’s Swimming and Diving
vs Northeastern University
6:30 p.m.

Men’s Swimming and Diving
vs Harvard University
6:30 p.m.

Women’s Volleyball
vs Middlebury College
7 p.m.

SATURDAY 26

Men’s Heavyweight Crew
Wormtown Chase Regatta

Women’s Openweight Crew
Head of the Fish

Sailing
at Yale, Brown, Boston University, and Tufts

Rifle
vs Norwich University
9 a.m.

Women’s Volleyball
vs Williams College
11 a.m.

Football
vs Maritime College
12 p.m.

Field Hockey
Field Hockey
vs Babson College
1 p.m.

Women’s Volleyball
vs Tufts University
3:30 p.m.

Men’s Soccer
vs Babson College
4 p.m.

Men’s Soccer
at WPI
7 p.m.

SUNDAY 27

Sailing
at Yale, Brown, Boston University, and Tufts

TUESDAY 29

Women’s Volleyball
vs Clark University
6 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 30

Women’s Soccer
vs Wellesley College
4 p.m.

Men’s Soccer
at WPI
7 p.m.

THURSDAY 31

Women’s Volleyball
vs Wesleyan University
6 p.m.

FRIDAY 1

Men’s Squash
vs Boston University
5 p.m.

Men’s Squash
vs Boston College
6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY 2

Women’s Fencing
at The Big One Invitational
9 a.m.

Men’s Fencing
at The Big One Invitational
9 a.m.

Men’s Water Polo
vs Harvard University
10 a.m.

Women’s Cross Country
at NEWMAC Championships
11 a.m.

Men’s Cross Country
at NEWMAC Championships
12 p.m.

Field Hockey
at Salve Regina University
12 p.m.

Women’s Swimming and Diving
at Springfield College
12 p.m.

Men’s Swimming and Diving
at Springfield College
12 p.m.

Women’s Soccer
vs Emerson College
1 p.m.

Men’s Soccer
vs Wheaton College
2 p.m.

SUNDAY 3

Men’s Water Polo
at Brown University
3 p.m.

TUESDAY 5

Men’s Soccer
NEWMAC Quarterfinals

Field Hockey
NEWMAC First-Round

Women’s Soccer
NEWMAC Quarterfinals

Men’s Squash
vs Northeastern University

Women’s Volleyball
vs Babson College
6 p.m.

Women’s Club Soccer Closes Season with Doubleheader Split

The MIT Women’s Club Soccer team wrapped up their 2024 regular season with a 0-3 loss to Harvard and a 8-0 win against Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) on Saturday. In their early game against Harvard on Briggs D, 17 mph winds made it hard to play the ball towards the direction of the parking lot in front of Tang Hall. Going against the wind in the first half, MIT quickly fell to a 0-3 deficit. Upon switching directions at halftime, MIT was able to finish the game without letting up another goal. In their later game against SNHU on Roberts Field, the wind

died down and the offense came to life. In a dominant showing, MIT scored 8 goals, including a haul (4 goals) by Corinne De La Mora ’27. Olivia Muñoz ’26, Layan Al Sharif G, Maria Alder ’25, and Serra Tulu ’28 each also scored a goal in the win. The team ends their season 6-1-1, third in the New England North Division behind Tufts (6-2-1) and Harvard (8-0-0). Despite their finishing position, MIT has qualified for a bid to Women’s Club Regionals. This year’s tournament will be held at Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, NY, on November 2-3. —Matthew Barnett

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Harris clashes with host in contentious interview on Fox

Vice President Kamala Harris, under pressure to broaden her appeal to Republicans and conservatives with Election Day fast approaching, sat for a contentious interview with Fox News where she said more bluntly than before that her presidency would not be a continuation of Joe Biden's.

The interview with Fox chief political anchor Bret Baier, which also featured a testy back-and-forth on immigration, represented a calculated gamble for Harris, given Fox's role as a conservative-leaning network that is one of the top news sources for Republicans. It offered her a chance to refashion a recent comment on ABC's "The View" that she could not think of anything she would do differently from Biden, a remark that even many Democrats strategists viewed as a misstep.

— Maeve Reston, FROM THE WASHINGTON POST
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 16, 2024

Giuliani must turn over \$6m NYC apartment to election workers

A judge has ordered Rudy Giuliani to turn over his Manhattan apartment and other valuables to two Georgia election workers as part of a defamation lawsuit. Last year, the two election workers—Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss—successfully sued Mr Giuliani for over \$140m (£106m). Mr. Giuliani, a former attorney to Donald Trump, had falsely accused them of tampering with votes during the 2020 presidential election.

In addition to the apartment, the federal judge ruled on Tuesday that Mr. Giuliani must turn over his watches, furniture and sports memorabilia to Ms. Freeman and Ms. Moss. The judge also ruled that Ms. Freeman and Ms. Moss are the beneficiaries of \$2m that the one-time New York City mayor says Trump's 2020 presidential campaign still owes him.

— Rachel Looker, FROM BBC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 22, 2024

Man charged in attempted Trump assassination seeks judge's recusal

Defense lawyers for the Hawaii man charged with trying to assassinate former President Donald J. Trump at his golf course in Florida renewed their efforts on Wednesday to get the Trump-appointed judge who is handling the case to step down, citing a recent news article saying she is under consideration for a top legal position if Mr. Trump wins the election.

Lawyers for the man, Ryan W. Routh, had initially asked the judge, Aileen M. Cannon, to step back from the case last week. They claimed then that there was "an appearance of partiality" on the part of Judge Cannon given that Mr. Trump has "repeatedly praised" her rulings in the separate criminal case in which he stands accused of illegally holding on to classified documents after he left office.

— Alan Feuer and Maggie Haberman, FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

"I felt like luggage": American Airlines fined \$50 million for violating disabled passengers' rights

The federal government is slapping American Airlines with a \$50 million fine after a multi-agency investigation uncovered repeat violations of the rules designed to protect airline passengers who use wheelchairs.

The investigation by the Department of Transportation aided by the Justice Department's civil rights division found that American made "numerous serious violations" of disabled passenger rules between 2019 and 2023. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told reporters that American mishandled and damaged "thousands" of wheelchairs and failed to provide adequate assistance to disabled passengers.

— Pete Muntean, FROM CNN
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

RFK Jr. asks Supreme Court to take his name off Wisconsin's ballot

A month after demanding that New York election officials keep his name on that state's presidential ballot, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. asked the Supreme Court on Wednesday to remove him from the ballot in the battleground state of Wisconsin. In a longshot emergency appeal, Kennedy argued in part that Wisconsin is violating his First Amendment rights by keeping his name as a choice for voters. Kennedy suspended his independent presidential campaign in August and endorsed former President Donald Trump.

"He wants everyone who will listen to him to vote for Trump," Kennedy's attorneys told the Supreme Court. "That is core political speech and it's protected under the First Amendment."

— John Fritze, FROM CNN
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

American creating Harris deepfakes uses Russian intel

Catherine Belton
FROM THE WASHINGTON POST
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

A former deputy Palm Beach County sheriff who fled to Moscow and became one of the Kremlin's most prolific propagandists is working directly with Russian military intelligence to pump out deepfakes and circulate misinformation that targets Vice President Kamala Harris's campaign, according to Russian documents obtained by a European intelligence service and reviewed by The Washington Post.

The documents show that John Mark Dougan, who also served in the U.S. Marines and has long claimed to be working independently of the Russian government, was provided funding by an officer from the GRU, the country's military intelligence service. Some of the payments were made after fake news sites he created began to have difficulty accessing Western artificial intelligence systems this

spring and he needed an AI generator — a tool that can be prompted to create text, photos and video.

Dougan's liaison at the GRU is a senior figure in Russian military intelligence working under the cover name Yuri Khoroshevsky, the documents show. The officer's real name is Yuri Khoroshenky, though he is only referred to as Khoroshevsky in the documents, and he serves in the GRU's Unit 29155, which oversees sabotage, political interference operations and cyberwarfare targeting the West, according to two European security officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

The more than 150 documents — which were shared with The Post to demonstrate the extent of Russian interference through Dougan and focus mostly on the period between March 2021 and August 2024 — for the first time expose some of the inner workings of a network that researchers and intelligence officials say has become the most potent source of fake news emanating from Russia and targeting American voters over the past year.

Disinformation researchers say Dougan's network was probably behind a recent viral fake video smearing Democratic vice-presidential nominee Tim Walz, which U.S. intelligence officials on Tuesday said was created by Russia. It received nearly 5 million views on X in less than 24 hours, Microsoft said.

Since September 2023, posts, articles and videos generated by Dougan and some of the Russians who work with him have garnered 64 million views, said McKenzie Sadeghi, who has closely followed Dougan's sites and is a researcher at NewsGuard, a company that tracks disinformation online.

"Compared with other Russian disinformation campaigns, Dougan has a clear understanding of what would resonate with Western audiences and the political atmosphere, which I think has made this more effective," Sadeghi said.

Justice Dept. warns Musk that \$1 mil. giveaway might be illegal

Theodore Schleifer and Glenn Thrush
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

The Justice Department sent a letter to the super PAC founded by Elon Musk this week warning that awarding \$1 million to registered voters who signed a petition might violate federal laws against paying voters, according to two people with knowledge of the situation.

Similar warning letters from the department's public integrity unit have been sent to businesses and organizations that tied promotions to voting and are intended to suggest that continuing such an activity could result in a criminal investigation.

The letters typically do not outline the department's next steps and are intended to force the recipient to make changes to conform with the law.

A Justice Department spokesman declined to comment. Mr. Musk, the super PAC and its lawyer did not offer a comment on Tuesday or Wednesday. The news was first reported by the 24Sight newsletter.

It is illegal to pay people to register to vote. The idea for Mr. Musk's petition in support of the First and Second Amendments was novel, coming in part from one of Mr. Musk's longtime executives who was advising the super PAC, called America PAC. But some campaign-finance lawyers and Democrats said they believed it overstepped by inducing people to register with the sweepstakes.

Three voters in Pennsylvania and one in North Carolina have been awarded \$1 million checks, and Mr. Musk has promised to award one voter \$1 million every day through Election Day as part of his efforts on behalf of former President Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign.

In 2010, the Justice Department

warned Vince McMahon, then the owner of the World Wrestling Entertainment, when he offered free WWE clothing to voters, writing that it would be "a federal offense to pay or offer to pay an individual a thing of value for voting."

Mr. Musk's defenders had said the move was not illegal because it merely paid people who signed a petition — and did not specifically award people for registering to vote. But Mr. Musk has said that one of his goals in Pennsylvania was to register voters, and the petition was open only to registered voters in battleground states. Mr. Musk's group recently began referring to its winners as "spokespeople" for the super PAC.

The super PAC initially offered \$47 to people who referred signers to the petition. It has said that it collected over 1 million signatures for the petition in battleground states, meeting the group's stated goal.

Vast lithium deposit in Arkansas could be stunningly valuable

Elizabeth Weise
FROM USA TODAY
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

Arkansas may be home to a vast resource that could reshape the world's energy needs: a valuable battery component called lithium that's been nicknamed "white gold" and "the new gasoline."

It's an important discovery because renewable energy needs batteries and many batteries need lithium. But the resource is in short supply globally and especially in the United States.

A release this week from the U.S. Geological Survey suggests the U.S. might have all the lithium it needs in ancient brine which dates back to the Jurassic period and is buried deep below southern Arkansas.

There could be between 5 and 19 million tons of lithium buried there, enough to meet projected world demand for lithium car batteries nine times over, the USGS said in a statement.

The catch: figuring out how to extract that much lithium without wreaking havoc on the environment and the water table. Lithium is notoriously difficult to extract and has been linked to water depletion and other issues.

The discovery in Arkansas isn't unprecedented: Other nations also have vast, hard-to-reach deposits of lithium. But the location in Arkansas has already caught the eye of companies like Exxon that hope to develop practical ways to mine the valuable metal.

Lithium is a soft, silvery alkali metal that, in its pure form, is so reactive and flammable it has to be stored either in a vacuum or an inert gas like argon or an inert liquid like mineral oil.

It also happens to make fast-charging, high-energy-density and long-lifespan batteries, which is why lithium-ion batteries are used in cells phones, laptops, electric vehicles and for large energy storage systems.

Unfortunately, it's also in short supply as the world shifts from

burning fossil fuels for energy to carbon-neutral power sources like solar and wind. Utility-scale battery installations allow energy to be stored when the wind blows and the sun shines and used when people want it.

That's especially important in wind- and solar-rich areas like the U.S. "wind corridor" that runs from North Dakota and Montana southward to western Texas and for utility-scale solar power, where the resource is richest in the southeast and southwest.

Currently the U.S. relies on imports to supply about 25% of its lithium, according to the USGS. The nation has been working to expand domestic battery manufacturing as currently most such batteries come from China. Securing critical minerals, with lithium being one of the most important ones, is part of a federal strategy to protect U.S. manufacturing and supply chains.

Lithium is produced either from hard rock mines, clay mines or from ancient brines.

U.S. says North Korean troops in Russia to join war in Ukraine

Eric Schmitt, David E. Sanger, and Anatoly Kurmanaev
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

North Korea has sent troops to Russia to join the fight against Ukraine, a major shift in Moscow's effort to win the war, U.S. officials confirmed on Wednesday. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III called the North's presence a "very, very serious" escalation that would have ramifications in both Europe and Asia.

"What exactly are they doing? Left to be seen," Mr. Austin told reporters at a military base in Italy after a trip to Ukraine. He gave no details about the number of troops already there or the number expected to arrive.

Mr. Austin cast President Vladimir V. Putin's need for North Korean mercenaries as a sign of desperation.

"This is an indication that he may be in even more trouble than most people realize," he said. "He went tin-cupping early on to get additional weapons and materials from the D.P.R.K.," he added, using the abbreviation for Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "and then from Iran, and now he's making a move to get more people."

But he said intelligence analysts were still trying to discern whether the troops were moving toward Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials insist they are headed there, and Ukraine's defense minister was quoted on Wednesday saying he expected to see North Korean troops in Kursk, the Russian territory that Ukraine has occupied, in the coming days.

Mr. Austin's statement came as American intelligence officials said they were preparing to release a trove of intelligence, including satellite photographs, that show troop ships moving from North Korea to training areas in Vladivostok on Russia's east coast and other Russian territory further to the north.

Deadly Israeli strikes in Beirut, Gaza as U.S. pushes for ceasefire

Ramy Inocencio, Tucker Reals, and Barny Smith
FROM CBS NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 22, 2024

Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Israel Tuesday to make another push for a ceasefire in the close U.S. ally's multi-front war with Iran's so-called proxy groups. Just hours before he landed, air raid sirens pierced the morning quiet in Tel Aviv and operations at Ben Gurion airport were briefly suspended, heralding the latest attempted attack by Hezbollah in Lebanon, this time with about 20 rockets or drones aimed at northern and central Israel, according to the Israel Defense Forces.

Israel has stepped up its assault on Hezbollah in recent days, pummeling offices of a financial institution across Lebanon that the IDF claims funnels Iranian money to the U.S. and Israeli-designated terrorist group.

One Israeli strike on Monday night hit near the Lebanese capital's biggest hospital, killing at least 13 people including a child and wounding dozens more, according to the country's health ministry. Israel has issued warnings to residents in some parts of Beirut before airstrikes and ordered tens of thousands of people to evacuate their homes in the Hezbollah strongholds of southern Lebanon.

But residents said there was no warning in the densely populated area around Beirut's Rafik Hariri Hospital before the Monday strike. Many displaced Lebanese civilians have flooded into the area from further south, where Israel is also carrying out ground operations.

The long-time presence of both Hezbollah and the return of Israel's military contravenes United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which says no military can operate in Lebanon except the Lebanese armed forces. That has not been reality, however, for

ISIS-K threat grows as it launches targeted, sophisticated propaganda

The Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan has ramped up its recruitment efforts in the past year, American officials and analysts say, rolling out a sophisticated propaganda campaign designed to persuade disaffected Muslims to carry out terrorist plots in the U.S. and other Western countries. The recent arrest of an Afghan accused of plotting an Election Day attack in the U.S., as well as recent plots in France, Sweden and elsewhere, highlight the growing threat posed by ISIS-K, officials and counterterrorism experts say.

Seeking to rally support and recruit from a range of Muslim diaspora communities in Europe and the U.S., the group has churned out a high volume of videos and articles in more than a dozen languages, including Dari and Pashto, the two primary languages spoken in Afghanistan.

— Dan De Luce, FROM NBC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 20, 2024

U.S. and Israel warn of potential attack on tourist locations in Sri Lanka

Both the United States and Israel issued security alerts Wednesday warning of a potential attack on tourist locations in a coastal area of Sri Lanka. The US Embassy alert advised they had received "received credible information warning of an attack targeting popular tourist locations in the Arugam Bay area."

"Due to the serious risk posed by this threat, the Embassy imposed a travel restriction on Embassy personnel for Arugam Bay effective immediately and until further notice," it said, noting that US citizens "are strongly urged to avoid the Arugam Bay area until further notice."

— Jennifer Hansler, FROM CNN
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

Austria far right shunned for coalition despite winning election

Austria's President, Alexander Van der Bellen, has asked the leader of the conservative People's Party (OVP) and incumbent Chancellor Karl Nehammer to form a coalition government - despite the fact that the far-right Freedom Party won the general election last month.

The anti-immigrant, Russia-friendly Freedom Party came top in the election in September with almost 29% of the vote and its leader, Herbert Kickl, said he should lead the next government.

However all the other parties have ruled out forming a coalition with him. Following talks among the three largest parties, President Alexander Van der Bellen said it was clear that Kickl "would not be able to find a coalition partner who would make him Chancellor."

— Bethany Bell, FROM BBC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 22, 2024

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar killed in Gaza by Israeli forces, officials say

Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was killed by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, Israel Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Thursday. Sinwar has been credited as the mastermind behind the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that led to the deaths of 1,200 people, the worst terrorist attack in Israel's history. "The master murderer Yahya Sinwar, who is responsible for the massacre and atrocities of October 7, was killed" by Israel Defense Forces soldiers, Katz said in a statement. "This is a great military and moral achievement for Israel and a victory for the entire free world against the evil axis of extreme Islam led by Iran."

Sinwar, 62, had served as Hamas' leader in Gaza since 2017 and assumed leadership of the group's political bureau in July.

— David Brennan and Meredith Deliso, FROM ABC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED MONTH DAY, YEAR

Gisele Pelicot takes stand in French mass rape trial

Gisele Pelicot, the French woman whose former husband is on trial for drugging and raping her when they were married, and inviting dozens of other men to rape her, took the stand in court on Wednesday. She told the court in Avignon she wants women who have been raped to know that "it's not for us to have shame - it's for them."

"I want all women who have been raped to say: Madame Pelicot did it, I can too. I don't want them to be ashamed any longer," she said, referring to her request for an open trial and for the videos of the alleged rapes to be shown.

Ms Pelicot, 71, was taking the stand following a request from her legal team that she be given the chance to respond to the evidence and testimony that have been shared so far at the trial.

— Laura Gozzi, FROM BBC NEWS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

Miners are razing forests to meet surging demand for metals and minerals, report says

Whether it's digging for metals and minerals for cellphones and electric vehicles or coal for power generation, mining around the world has skyrocketed since 2000, causing widespread destruction of tropical forests, degrading the environment and displacing Indigenous and local communities, the World Resources Institute says in a report released Wednesday.

The analysis highlighted that from 2001 to 2020, the world lost nearly 1.4 million hectares (3,459,475 acres) of trees due to mining — an area roughly the size the country of Montenegro. Nearly a third were in tropical primary rainforests. Protected areas were also damaged.

— Victoria Milko, FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 23, 2024

ADVICE

On Freshman Fall: Fears and the Firehose

By Auntie Matter

I am just another freshman, trying to make sense of it all. I feel like I have too much going on, trying to do many things at once, with hard classes, trying to make diverse new friends, and trying to find clubs that define me and my hobbies. I feel like there's a constant push to figure out who I am or what I'm supposed to be doing, but it's very hard. And then there's dating, with the November rule, my "super" active roommate, and a bunch of other stuff. How can I find peace in the storm without always feeling the overbearing burden of opportunity cost on my shoulders?

Dear Chocolate Cookie,

While you self-describe as “just another freshman,” the commonality of your problems doesn’t make them any less valid. Your concerns are still important, so much so that the entirety of the Matter family wanted to respond as one, hopeful that it will benefit others. There’s no denying it: freshman fall is overstimulating. Maybe you heard that people meet their college-besties-for-life in freshman year. That sentiment, and others like it, terrifies people. Some of us are upperclassmen, and even we fear that we didn’t do enough at MIT.

Maybe we read too much into it—but you described trying to find clubs that define you and your hobbies. It’s worth ask-

ing yourself if that statement could be inverted, where you let your hobbies define your clubs. Or perhaps you could let your friends drag you to a club meeting, where the worst case is that you pass time with a friend, but the best case is that you find a club you vibe with. In terms of quantity, lots of people “only” do 1-2 clubs their whole time at MIT. Others do a lot. Neither is better nor worse. We hope you are careful with letting this define too much of your self-perception.

You say you want to figure out who you are. As a freshman, we encourage you to try a bunch of different things, as you already seem to do, but also enable you to leave when it’s not worth it anymore. For example, maybe you pull up to a dormspammed event to see what the vibes are. But if you don’t like it? Then politely leave. Maybe the guys at some frat party are off-putting—you can dip and have your own night out. Learning what you don’t vibe with—activities and people alike—is just as valuable as figuring out what you’re “supposed” to be doing. Spending a semester or 2 or 3 like this to get a grasp of MIT’s academics, community, clubs, and so on is fine. You have the rest of your life to benefit from all this extra information you’re gonna learn about yourself. A semester or two is not a wasted “opportunity cost.” Your happiness, time, and health are not commodities, and you can’t trade them away for a future.

Now I want to talk about the interpersonal relationship concerns you bring up.

Let’s start with friends. You mentioned wanting to diversify your friend group.

Some of Auntie’s family also wonder about this. However, we believe there’s two broad ways to go about this. First, you put yourself out there, going to clubs or parties or dorms or events with people you wouldn’t normally, but might want to be friends with. It doesn’t have to be alone—bring a friend with you, and see what cool new people you both meet! Second, you see people in the spaces you are already in that you aren’t already friends with—you probably have similar interests, at the very least. Both approaches are cool and unique.

Yes, you might be rejected, or maybe the friendship you kindle won’t stick. This will hurt. It will be hard, especially when the novelty of MIT fades a bit, and freshmen are less receptive. But I encourage you to try. Most people on campus are not overtly mean. Even making an acquaintance is a win.

Let’s pivot to romantic relationships. The November Rule is a very barebones edict. It exists because freshmen should develop their own independent friendship circle and support system before entering a committed, intimate relationship. A romantic relationship requires a lot of effort, and if you’re combining that with the stress of figuring out who you are as a person, your academic and career interests, and your new friendships, it’s likely that the relationship will not work out. I would caution against jumping into a relationship until you’re confident that you have a friendship safety net for the worst-case scenario (a bad breakup). This could be after November 1st. I hope you recognize that there is no pride

in rushing into romantic relationships for the sake of it, for the optics, for the vibes. Romance is an investment on both sides that requires stability to be successful.

We aren’t naïve. It will probably sting when you see couples and soft launches and hard launches on people’s stories—one of us even deleted BeReal when the jealousy hit too hard. But taking some time to stabilize yourself at MIT first is an invaluable investment in yourself and your future interpersonal relationships, which is in no way inferior to actually pursuing such relationships immediately.

Finally, you will always meet people, like your roommate, at MIT who seem to be much better at you than something—or maybe all your somethings. That’s MIT for you. But recognize that the opposite is true—that there are people who will look up to you for succeeding at your something. You might doubt me, considering we have no idea who you are. But it doesn’t matter. Maybe it’s not something people “traditionally” value—but that doesn’t make it any less important. From your point of view, your roommate seems to take advantage of their strengths, but they might struggle with the same insecurities as you. All that matters is that you take advantage of your strengths, enhance your time at MIT, the relationships you build, the work you complete, the professors you talk to, and most importantly, the life you create for yourself. You got this, Chocolate Cookie.

With best wishes,
Auntie’s Family

AN ELLIE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

For Your Thoughts: American Healthcare

Never quite dismissive, never quite attentive: it’s a purgatory of white gowns and white walls.

By Ellie Montemayor
PUBLISHER

A Note from Ellie: *For Your Thoughts* is an anthology of miniature essays as part of “An Ellie For Your Thoughts” and represents Ellie’s attempts in incorporating a more literary and narrative style to her writing. Each piece is dedicated to whimsically raw musings on her natural environment and the world at large.

Hour One.

The deadness of the room is stifling. There’s an obvious sluggishness to the dozen or so half-asleep (dare I say half-dead?) denizens littering the place that feels so out of touch with the notion of “emergency.” EMERGENCY ROOM, the entryway leading into it reads, and I genuinely cannot reconcile the pressure-cooker affairs of a Grey’s Anatomy episode with whatever the hell is going on right now here at Mount Auburn.

Each time I make a visit to a hospital, I am austerly reminded, no niceties spared, that our glorious nation’s top-of-the-line medical system is in complete and utter shambles.

It’s just good old American healthcare. (As I write this piece, I make a quick Google search for “american healthcare wiki” and come across “Healthcare in the United States - Wikipedia.” The snippet of the article that the search engine happily hands over to me reads, “The U.S. is the only developed country without a system of universal healthcare, and a significant proportion of its population lacks health insurance.” You know when your dog runs up to you amidst a game of fetch and it’s clutched the desecrated corpse of a squirrel?)

I look up for half a second to regard the one moving thing in front of me. “I’m 27 weeks pregnant,” a woman says to the attendant at the registration desk. “Do I have to go to Labor and Delivery?” (It’s the name of a department at Mount Auburn.)

She says it with an interesting insipidness, as if this was just another day in the life for her, making her way to the emergency room on a Thursday night. Perhaps it is, given the sordid state of the American healthcare system. Folks must be in and out of here for conditions that are never treated like it’s their weekly grocery runs.

(I wonder if the ER has “regulars” that the staffers know by name. I hope they don’t. But maybe that would be a losing bet.)

Hives, chills, pain—pain all over, she explains to the clerk. And yet, to someone who doesn’t know a lick of English, her tone would indicate that she might as well have just been at the DMV for a dreadfully dull affair never to be thought about again. Not that she, a woman well into her third trimester of pregnancy, is experiencing enough pain to warrant a trip to the emergency room. She sits down on a sofa-chair somewhere in the waiting area, and I learn nothing more of her as she blends into the neighboring cast of characters.

The fingernail-clacking of my screen keyboard as I type-type-type myself out of spiralling boredom somehow competes with—hell, outmatches—the near-dead soundscape of the emergency room. Its competition: the mind-numbing humming of what I think is an electrical closet right next to me, a murmuring chatter between two folks that I don’t care enough to eavesdrop on, and the occasional cough.

“It’s a four-hour wait,” the attendant says.

Absolutely not. We google and call around in search of some other nearby hospital’s emergency room that might have less of a wait, like we’re combing the city for a medium-end restaurant to pop into or a dingy motel with an open room.

We leave within the hour, and I am relieved. We walk out as a man named Christopher with a cane and a limp is brought to the back room. “My name is Georgia—I’m one of the nurses”, an attendant says as she motions Christopher into the room lazily and with no kind of insistence whatsoever.

We had taken a Lyft to get to Mount Auburn, and we hop on another one to try our luck with some other place’s urgent care. Apparently you can schedule an appointment with urgent care for whatever “urgent” ailment you might or might not have.

I joke about how ambulances are really just rideshares for the rich. But it’s more a statement of fact, really. (My freshman year, I broke a bone when I dropped a newly-crufted cabinet on myself. I hopped on a Lyft to urgent care because I couldn’t afford an ambulance. It was a three hour wait, and I rushed back home at 2 a.m. to try and get enough sleep for work the next day.)

“F***ing hell,” I whisper under my breath, cold and weary. “At least we’re not taking the bus, I

guess.” Though I think that would be a whole other level of absurd that the universe might blink me out of existence at even the thought of it.

Anyways, into the car we get. It’s playing “Work From Home” by Fifth Harmony. Real Grey’s Anatomy-type music, isn’t it?

The pine-tree air freshener and the necklace with a cross on it shake against the motion of the car. Five minutes in: shit—there’s a line of cars in traffic in front of us, lined up farther than I can see. I wonder absent-mindedly, if I raise my hands to the air, that I might part the traffic like it’s the Yam Suph. I do it, and I look at the necklace with a cross on it. Nothing happens.

After what feels like the length of a whole month-and-a-half-long trip to Mount Sinai, I see the sign I’d been hoping for. Not from God—God, no.

It reads: TUFTS MEDICAL. LAW-RENCE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

Hour Two.

Tufts Med takes itself much less seriously than Mount Auburn does: it honestly feels like daycare with the overabundance of Halloween-type stickers plastering the lobby. We enter a little booth for registration, and the customary tribute of insurance info is done before we get to talk to an actual doctor-adjacent individual.

“Who would you like for your emergency contact?”

“Uh—Ellie Montemayor.”

I stick a thumb up and go back to my Gen-Z cell phone machinations.

We sign some forms that we never actually get to read with a crappy digital pen and find ourselves in the tiny waiting area of the urgent care moments later. A blow-up of the Wicked Witch of the West, or perhaps some Walmart-brand knock-off of her, makes the kind of menacing presence that only a figure smaller than a toddler could.

A broadcaster on Channel 7 says that some project or other could take eight years to complete. It might be finished, delays and all, before we finally get the hell out of here. A couple of characters exit the sticker-studded door to the urgent care that we wait to get into. One group had gotten too high and puked.

I fall asleep for a second and, the next thing we know, we’re ushered into the ward. We’re brought in alongside a blond girl named Greta; we go into Bay 1, and she goes into Bay 2 next to us.

With nothing else to do, I eavesdrop on our neighbor to hear about what got Greta

into this mess. I hear a little something about working with elementary school kids, something about feeling sick, but not much else.

I zone out for a bit, staring at a metal contraption that hangs from the ceiling. It looks like some sort of weathervane.

“You did good, considering I gagged ya,” I hear the nurse say to Greta in some kind of indistinct New England accent. Huh. And then something about, “with all of the things we nurses do to people.” Do I want to find out?

A few minutes later, I hear more commotion in Bay 2. Oh—Greta is still here, and I find out she has hives as the attending physician’s assistant checks on her. Ouch.

“She might have pneumonia,” the assistant says, and recommends a chest x-ray. “I might skip the x-ray for today,” Greta replies.

It could be nothing. It could also be bleeding in the lungs. I wonder why whatever Greta might or might not have isn’t being treated with more concern. Whatever the case, she leaves, nothing more done to alleviate her condition after a good two hours of undeserved patience.

Perhaps, in another life, we could have struck up conversation, though we were worlds apart and forever separated by the curtain that splits the space we both occupied. Perhaps we could have been friends, brought together by the type of bond that fate alone has the power to weave. But she leaves before I get the chance to—before I even think to—and whatever bifurcating story may have come of our chance encounter is erased, never to be thought about again.

Bare seconds after I finish mourning the loss of my would-be friend, in this special layer of hell reserved only for those sinners that deserve the worst torture of numbing boredom, I am told that we have to wait longer for the radiologist to look at the X-ray scan. I just turn up the white noise that’s playing on loop in my brain.

I don’t even know how much more time passes before we’re finally allowed to leave. It’s an ice pack, well wishes, and more paperwork that serve as our parting gifts. Paltry offerings, but I suppose we’ll take what we can get.

Some weeks later, we get the bill. It’s \$696 (and eight cents). Good thing we have insurance. Unlike a lot of other people in our glorious nation.

It’s just good old American healthcare.

THEATRE REVIEW

Leopoldstadt Invites Memory

From the lens of a multigenerational family of bourgeois Jews in Vienna, Austria, Leopoldstadt provides an intimate examination of the horrors of the Holocaust and invites viewers to engage in historical memory.

By Virginia Sun

Leopoldstadt

Written by Tom Stoppard

Directed by Carey Perloff

Produced in association with Shakespeare Theatre Company

The Huntington Theatre (264 Huntington Ave. Boston, MA 02115)

September 12 – October 13, 2024

The play Leopoldstadt is the story of a multigenerational family of highly educated, bourgeois Jews in Vienna, Austria. A talented cast delivered a beautifully acted and emotionally resonant performance at the Huntington Theatre. The play is segmented into five acts, each representing a different year: 1899, 1900, 1924, 1938, and 1955. Leopoldstadt gives due attention to



PHOTO COURTESY OF LIZA VOLL

The Merz family gathers for Christmas.

the horrors of the Nazis’ rise and the Holocaust, while also expanding the timeline of Jewish history beyond narratives that exclusively center the Shoah. The story begins in the Merz family home, an elegantly furnished space made vibrant by three generations coming together to celebrate Christmas as a cosmopolitan, wealthy, and intermarried Jewish family. Playwright Tom Stoppard, whose Leopoldstadt is not autobiographical but reflects aspects of his own family’s history, holds the setting constant while letting time pass. The family home, once the site of domestic pleasures and rich family ties, becomes the backdrop to political changes and violence that eventually break into this most intimate of spaces.

Depicting a family of more than a dozen members, Stoppard focuses more on the relationships and dialogues among family rather than individual personalities. The breaking of these kinship ties personifies the unfathomable scale of pogroms, the Anschluss, and the Holocaust as ominous signs and absences haunting earlier scenes of the family laughing at Christmas and Seder, children playing cats cradle, and adults discussing math and politics.

Premiered in 2020, Leopoldstadt shown today in the context of Israel’s genocidal assault in Palestine brings up complex questions regarding historical memory and what the responsibility of “never again” demands. The play faithfully portrays the horrors of genocide, its elimination of entire family lines and the burden of trauma and at times, guilt, of those who survive. At the same time, Leopoldstadt

makes an implicit argument that the state of Israel is an inevitable historical progression from centuries of antisemitism and Jewish statelessness, and made necessary by the Shoah.

Leopoldstadt invites the audience to tie together the central issue of Jews’ lack of full citizenship in Europe with Zionism. In the first act set in 1899, one of the Merz patriarchs lambasts Theodor Herzl’s newly published treatise, the foundation of modern Zionism. Rejecting Herzl, the father proudly asserts his Austrian identity, confident in his social status among Vienna’s bourgeois. The audience, with the advantage of foresight of the genocide to come, thus hopes with bated breath for the Merz family to abandon their faith in Austrian citizenship and society. They silently urge the Merzs to leave as the Anschluss—Germany’s annexation of Austria in 1938—takes place and things worsen. The father seems naive in his affirmation of his claims to Austria, vowing that Vienna is his home and urging his family to forget the “Judenstaat nonsense.” The play’s building tension culminates in him being proven wrong in the most fatal way.

Much of the play before the Anschluss focuses on the paradox of how integral Jews were to European intellectual life and society, yet how anti-Semitism still exclud-

THEATRE REVIEW

Nassim, as performed by LaWhore Vagistan:

A Drag Queen’s Compulsory Vulnerability

An experimental play blurs boundaries between playwright, actress, and audience.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID MONTEITH-HODGE

Nassim Soleimanpour, playwright and performer of Nassim, opens the script for Act Two.

By Virginia Sun

Nassim

Directed by Omar Elerian

The Huntington Calderwood

(527 Tremont St. Boston, MA 02116)

October 4 – October 27, 2024

The experimental play Nassim is bursting with surprises for both audience and performer. Each night, a different performer takes the stage without reading the script beforehand. Projected onto a large screen, mysterious disembodied hands manually flip pieces of paper that reveal the script line by line. This experimental approach generates a current of excitement, anxiety, and curiosity as the play unfolds in unforeseen and potentially unstable ways. What if the performer messes up? However, it is the imperfections, the audience participation, and the feeling that anything can happen that lend Nassim an electric, ephemeral feel.

The night of October 12 blessed the audience with performer LaWhore Vagistan (@lawhorevagistan on Instagram), everyone’s favorite overdressed, over-opinionated South Asian drag aunty. It was strange to see a drag queen dethroned from her usual performance context in the straightjackets of script and theater stage. While theater is often a more formal context that draws older and whiter audiences (which emerges from the art form’s specific class and racial history), drag is usually more informal, irreverent, and glamorous. Audience members and fellow drag queens often cheer their support at the top of their lungs during shows. LaWhore Vagistan’s presence brought this energy to the Huntington Calderwood. Her witty addendums to the script, fearlessness in forging ahead into unknown territory, and sharp comedic timing invited the audience to engage loudly and often. The audience at times yelled suggestions on interpreting the script when the performer faltered. Many of the unwritten rules of theater—no audience talking, no clapping before the end, no suggestions to the performers—fell to the wayside. In this way, theater became more accessible and exciting as boundaries between audience and performer blurred.

Nassim is often lighthearted. The playwright asked LaWhore Vagistan to share her favorite curse word (cumbucket) and forced her to eat a cherry tomato every time she mispronounced a Farsi word. And yet Nassim was the first time I saw a drag queen cry. LaWhore Vagistan, choking up at the prepared words of the playwright, said that she wished she could show the playwright her family. LaWhore Vagistan, who could not prepare for the play’s emotional vagaries, was thinking of her own, real family. This was not acting crying, but instead an affective portal into the performer’s inner world, revealing something intimate about her relationship with her family. Seeing a drag queen unexpectedly cry onstage, against drag’s typical performance of fierceness

and impenetrable confidence, created an enticing allure of playwright-performer-audience intimacy and a shared witnessing of authentic vulnerability. This moment bolstered the play’s theme of the transformative nature of human connection, but the surprise script took away the performer’s agency to choose what she shows to the world. In seeking to strip away the barriers of performance by constantly catching the actor off guard, Nassim muddles the issue of consent in the relationship between playwright and performer.

Nassim is structured as a progressively more intimate dialogue between performer and playwright. However, the actual context is that of a theater performance, with anonymous audience members voyeuristically watching a relationship develop on stage. LaWhore Vagistan cried before people whom she perhaps did not want to cry before. At another point, the playwright asks LaWhore Vagistan to show him a picture from her camera reel. LaWhore Vagistan hesitated for a few seconds, but of course assented, bound to the expectation (and perhaps contract) that she execute the script in good faith. Her picture was projected on the screen for the audience to consume.

A good sport and captivating performer, LaWhore Vagistan bravely held her head up high after the slight embarrassments and chidings that the playwright goodnaturedly poked at her. At times she stood quietly and lonelily onstage, the remnant of tears smudging her eyeliner, under the temporary control of a playwright who 90 minutes ago had been a stranger but who had asked for her intimacy, vulnerability, and personhood. Performing emotion in the role of an actress was not enough for playwright Nassim Soleimanpour. Experimental theater is often meant to cross boundaries. However, Nassim has a lot to learn from drag, which is often provocative and overturns artistic norms while still striving to create an environment of mutual respect and consent.

CONCERT REVIEW

The organ takes center stage at Symphony Hall

The BSO performs Berlioz, Gandolfi, and Saint-Saëns

Week 3:
Berlioz's Grand Overture to Waverley, Michael Gandolfi's Ascending Light, Saint-Saëns' Symphony No. 3 in C Minor

Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Conducted by Samy Rachid
Olivier Latry on organ
Boston Symphony Hall
October 12, 2024

By Vivian Hir
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) concert on Saturday, October 12, was special for its focus on the organ, a keyboard instrument known for its resonant, high-range sounds. BSO Assistant Conductor Samy Rachid led the orchestra, and distinguished organist Olivier Latry was the guest soloist. The repertoire was well-balanced, beginning with Berlioz's Grand Overture to Waverley, followed by contemporary composer Michael Gandolfi's Ascending Light, and ending with Saint-Saën's iconic Symphony No. 3 ("Organ").

Although the concert's theme was the organ, the BSO first performed Berlioz's Grand Overture to Waverley, a Romantic period piece that follows the traditional orchestral arrangement. The piece began with a slow, romantic melody played in triple meter. The cello's deep, full sound complemented well with the violin's breathy sound. When the brass and woodwind instruments took on a more prominent role in the middle, their various textures melded well with the strings to create a colorful soundscape.

The best part of Waverley, however, was the sudden transition from larghetto to allegro vivace because of how unexpected it was. In the latter half of the piece, the orchestra's fast tempo and loud dynamics had this unstoppable energy that felt tangible, especially the violin's rapid tremolos and the horn's exuberant notes. Overall, Waverley was a delight to listen to because of the piece's magnificent transformation, from a graceful melody to a celebratory fanfare.

Next was Gandolfi's Ascending Light, a work for organ and orchestra that was commissioned by the BSO and premiered in 2015. Ascending Light was composed to honor the late Armenian-American organist Berj Zamkochian and to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide in 1915. Before the performance, Gandolfi

was invited to speak briefly about the work. One of Gandolfi's inspirations for the work was finding pictures of people who lost their lives in the genocide. "I started hearing mu-



PHOTO COURTESY OF HILARY SCOTT

Organist Olivier Latry and BSO assistant conductor Samy Rachid perform Michael Gandolfi's "Ascending Light" with the orchestra.

sic that was powerful, not mournful," Gandolfi said. "[Ascending Light] is an affirmation of life."

Ascending Light opened with "Vis Vitalis," a movement memorable for its rich, bright sounds from the organ and percussion instruments, which created a grand and momentous atmosphere. The wide array of sounds were somewhat overstimulating at first, but also was exciting to listen to because of the diverse timbres, from the silky sounds of the strings to the flute's high-pitch trills.

The movement later transitioned to an organ solo. The organ solo was akin to a piano solo, though the organ's reedy timbre sometimes made the notes sound mellow

and obscured instead of achieving a crisp, clear sound. Despite this, the organ shone for its loud, brassy chords at the end because they returned to the movement's theme that the world is filled with energy radiating from everywhere.

Following "Vis Vitalis" was the second movement that underwent a significant journey from an Armenian lullaby ("Lullaby of Tigranakert") to the coda theme ("Ascending Light"). In the lullaby, the lone notes in the organ solo conveyed feelings of solemnness, which provided the audience a period of contemplation after an energetic first movement. Over the course of the second movement, the momentum in the piece builds up again, starting with the wispy drone in the strings that were like shimmers of light, signaling hope for a brighter future. The piece then reached a climax reflective of the opening in "Vis Vitalis" because it was packed with optimism and resilience.

The main highlight of the concert was Saint-Saëns' Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, a

work of sound that blended well with the rest of the orchestra.

Towards the middle of the symphony (Allegro moderato), the action-packed music sounded like the buzzing of bees and became more dramatic in Presto. It was impressive to see the strings play the same melody faster than the one in Allegro moderato, and the quick tempo built up to this heightened tension of a race against time. This sense of urgency was evident in the rapid call and response with the woodwinds and the violin, as well as the short, piercing notes from the trumpet.

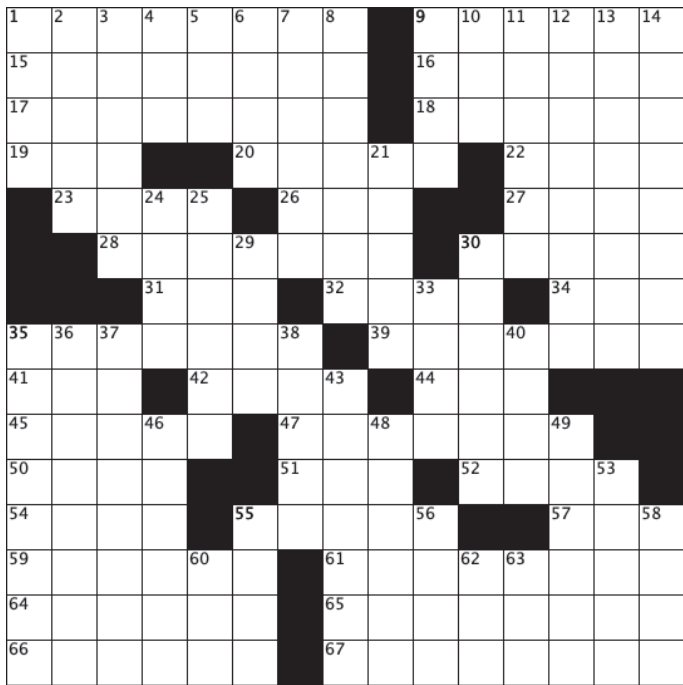
The best part of the piece was the last movement (Allegro), where the organ took center stage. When Latry played the opening line, the organ's C major chords were like a sudden, intense penetration of the sun's rays because of their joyous and festive sound. Then, the piano and strings played a wonderful duet, as the piano's crystal clear glissando perfectly intertwined with the violin's sweet, ethereal sound. The

also known as the "Organ Symphony." The beginning of the piece was interesting because the major contrast between the peaceful and stormy melodies gave rise to this underlying conflict. The forceful bowings and the fast sixteenth notes in the violin cultivated an image of a brewing storm, but then entered a period of calmness from the woodwinds' chirp-like sounds and the cello's light pizzicatos.

When Latry played the organ, the vibrant sounds helped highlight main notes in the orchestra's melody. Latry's performance was splendid because the long, sustained organ chords reverberated without being overwhelming. The organ was icing on the cake, providing an additional layer

finale was engaging because it took on many twists and turns that were a bundle of surprises, from the change in keys to the change in dynamics. The cinematic movement ended with jubilant tunes from the brass and the organ's powerful chords that filled the entire concert hall with a ringing sound.

Right after the orchestra finished playing, people in the audience gave a warm round of applause and a standing ovation. Overall, the concert was unforgettable because the organ's glorious sounds enhanced the listening experience. As someone who is used to piano solos in symphonic music, the organ's grandeur left a strong impression on me.



56 Let out
58 Custom
60 6-down first name,
shortly
62 Dubs counterpart
63 See 23-across

CONCERT REVIEW

Fantasies Through Piano: Emanuel Ax Opens the Celebrity Series of Boston

The acclaimed pianist performs Beethoven, Schoenberg, and Schumann



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT TORRES

Emanuel Ax performs piano for Celebrity Series of Boston on Sunday, October 13 at NEC Jordan Hall.

Emanuel Ax
Piano Recital
Celebrity Series of Boston
Oct. 13, 2024
NEC Jordan Hall

By Angelica Zhu and Vivian Hir

On October 13, acclaimed pianist Emanuel Ax opened the Celebrity Series of Boston's 2024-2025 season in Jordan Hall. Ax's list of accolades is impressive: he has received many Grammy awards, won first place in the Rubinstein Piano Competition, and been awarded the Avery Fisher Prize. The concert consisted of five pieces from Ludwig van Beethoven, Austrian-American Arnold Schoenberg, and German composer Robert Schumann. Although they come from different backgrounds, one theme they have in common is fantasy, a compositional style that has improvisational roots.

For the first half of the concert, Ax played Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 13 "Quasi una fantasia" – in the meaning of fantasy – followed by Schoenberg's Drei Klavierstücke ("Three piano pieces") and Sonata No. 13's more famous twin: Piano Sonata No. 14 ("Moonlight"). Sonata No. 13 began with gentle chords that had a calming quality, which provided a stable heartbeat throughout the beginning. It was delightful to hear the left hand's ascending and descending scales because of its light-hearted and graceful nature. Ax's stage presence was engrossing as he held his hand in mid air after an intense passage and allowed the last note to float for a while, before returning to a calm section.

The second movement was characterized by light staccatos that provided small bursts of resonant sounds akin to other instruments, such as a clarinet or horn. Afterwards, Adagio took on a dreamy, meditative theme that reflected the title of the piece ("Quasi una fantasia") because of its expressiveness, especially the long trills that built up anticipation. The piece concluded with Allegro vivace, a vibrant movement for its rich, polyphonic texture of arpeggios in staccato and rolling notes.

Before Ax played Drei Klavierstücke, he shared his thoughts about Schoenberg and the piece with the audience. Although some in the audience may not enjoy Schoenberg's musical style because of its atonality and dissonance, Ax argued otherwise. "I find a kaleidoscope of emotions, from fury to yearning," Ax said.

From this, Ax hoped that his rendition would "transmit wonderful music" to the audience.

In Schoenberg's "Three piano pieces," the combination of contrasting rhythms, tempos, and dynamics compared to how scenes switch drastically in a dream, with no direction or apparent logic. The largely different elements mashed together in an Alice-in-wonderland way, especially in the cliffhanger ending that felt like a dream cut off in the middle of the action.

Ax's rendition of "Moonlight," one of the most popular pieces in classical music, was a highlight of the concert. The piece was filled with rather simple melodies and repeated chords, but has the ability to entrap the listener in its emotional imagery as it builds over time. The slow, more depressive tunes it began with conjured a sense of emptiness yet endlessness. Then, the music reached a crescendo that felt like a ray of light shining through an otherwise gloomy and dark night. As the music gained force, it was like the complete force of a full moon that radiated on the stage.

The intermission was followed by Schoenberg's Sechs kleine Lavierstücke ("Six Little Pieces") and Schumann's Fantasie in C Major. Ax described Schoenberg's six "little pieces" as "moments of whatever emotion you choose," and invited the audience to listen to Schoenberg's "experiments." He jokingly said that "even if you didn't like them, they'll be over in a minute," which elicited some laughs from the audience.

Truly, they were remarkably short for a musical piece, with the longest miniature being only eighteen bars long. Each burst of music focused on one theme or feeling, such as playful tip toeing or very slow repeating beats. Each moment appeared and ended quickly, almost like a fleeting dream that's hard to remember after it passed.

The concert closed with Schumann's Fantasie in C Major, an energetic and passionate piece involving three movements: the first two building in vitality and passion and the third being more slow and meditative. The piece felt full of yearning and want, but also like a dance with no mistakes; every step was placed exactly where it was expected. As the tempo increased, tensions appeared in the music as it became more frantic. After bowing and receiving a standing ovation, Ax sat down again to perform Schubert's Lied Ständchen (Serenade) as a goodbye to the audience.

With the eighty-eight black and white keys of a piano at his fingertips, Ax strung together soft and powerful melodies that resembled dreams and unrestrained imagination. As the audience filed out into the gray rainy Boston evening, they are left contemplating what fantasies are left beyond those recorded by sheet music and notes.

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CONCERT REVIEW

Mahler's Eighth echos through Symphony Hall with grandiosity

Boston Symphony Orchestra, choirs, and soloists, bring Mahler's "Symphony of a Thousand" to the Symphony Hall stage



PHOTO COURTESY OF WINSLOW TOWNSON

Andris Nelsons conducts Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the BSO, Tanglewood Festival Chorus, Boys of the Saint Paul's Choir School, and soloists.

By Noah McAllister

The Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) performed Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8—his "Symphony of a Thousand"—on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at Symphony Hall in Boston, under the direction of Music Director Andris Nelsons. The performance featured soloists Latonia Moore (soprano), Christine Goerke (soprano), Ying Fang (soprano), Mihoko Fujimura (mezzo-soprano), Gerhild Romberger (mezzo-soprano), Andreas Schager (tenor), Michael Nagy (baritone), and Ryan Speedo Green (bass-baritone); it also included the Tanglewood Festival Chorus (directed by James Burton), and the Boys of the Saint Paul's Choir School (directed by Brandon Straub). Mahler's music was brought to life with a spectacular performance of this rarely-played symphony.

While the performance did not literally feature one thousand musicians, the stage was as packed as the house: musicians had to weave through a sea of chairs and stands in order to reach their own. The Eighth Symphony, written in 1906 and finished in 1907, calls for the fullest possible orchestra, including choir, boy's choir, mandolin, two harps, eight horns, and organ. Dexter Kennedy sat at the helm of Symphony Hall's Aeolian-Skinner/Foley-Baker organ. The symphony is structured in two movements: the first sung in Latin and based on the medieval hymn Veni creator spiritus ("Come, creator spirit"); the second sung in German and based on the end of Goethe's Faust.

The first movement opened unabashedly with organ and chorus, followed by march-like brass. The BSO strings played with an energetic clarity and precision that could be heard from the back of the hall, driving Nelsons' decidedly allegro tempo forward. Tenor Andreas Schager and soprano Latonia Moore's voices carried over the ensemble (especially on "altissimi," or "highest"), but they also demonstrated an ability to blend with the rest of the soloists. Associate concertmaster Alexander Vellinzo's solo was haunting, with a distinct Mahlerian flare recalling the earlier symphonies. The first movement ended with antiphonal brass in a reprise of the opening so grand it could end a symphony. Nelsons led the orchestra through the sweeping A-flat major scale in a plagal cadence fitting to a hymn's finale.

Opening with an E-flat minor pizzicato in the lower strings, the second movement was more contrapuntal than the first, with interjections from woodwinds, horns, and tremolo strings. The choir does not come in until later, with staccato, sylvan lyrics describing the forest and natural themes. The

Mahler's Eighth Symphony
BSO/Tanglewood Festival Chorus/Boys of the Saint Paul's Choir School
Conducted by Andris Nelsons
Location: Boston Symphony Hall
Dates Playing Oct. 4–6

entrance of Michael Nagy (Pater Ecstasticus) and then Ryan Speedo Green (Pater Profundus) marked a change in the tone of the work, with many contrasting ideas and textures entering and exiting the musical forefront. A particular highlight of the second movement was Ying Fang's solo from the balcony as Mater Gloriosa, performed with beauty and elegance.

The last scene, titled "Chorus Mysticus," showcased the expressive capabilities of both the Tanglewood Festival Chorus and the BSO. The scene starts with a pianissimo chorus, singing Goethe's text "All things transitory are only symbols," and gradually crescendos to a roaring fortissimo at the end of the piece. In this crescendo, principal horn Richard Sebring's solo was particularly sublime, his effortless leaps adding to the otherworldly quality. Nelsons' control and restraint of the massive ensemble was unparalleled, often standing far back on the podium to indicate a drop to pianissimo or niente. As with the end of the first movement, four trumpets and three trombones joined the orchestra from the upper left balcony in an effect that can only be described as angelic. In the final moments of the symphony, Nelsons directed his hand towards the antiphonal group as their sound carried throughout Symphony Hall. The final tutti E-flat major chord ended the work in a triumph.

The program was met with an immediate and thunderous standing applause by the audience, which lasted over 10 minutes. The Boys of the Saint Paul's Choir School, standing on the right balcony, were met with roars and cheers, as were the vocal soloists. This was a very refreshing concert, and I walked away from Symphony Hall with a feeling of wonder at the masterpiece that I had just heard.

Meet Anantha Chandrakasan, Dean of Engineering

Chandrakasan: “MIT takes pride in leading rather than following. So, you must be willing to take risks. This is what drives my approach for selecting areas to work on.”

By Sophia Zhang
and Karie Shen

MIT School of Engineering's Dean Anantha P. Chandrakasan has made remarkable contributions to MIT since he joined our institution in 1994. Known for his key role in the MIT Energy-Efficient Circuits and Systems Group and in the founding of many MIT programs including MIT Quest for Intelligence, Dean Chandrakasan has made a lasting impact on the students here at MIT.

In this interview, Dean Chandrakasan shares the pivotal moments that have shaped his journey to MIT. From unexpected twists to personal anecdotes, this interview provides a close up view on Chandrakasan's experiences as well as shares some surprising fun facts about his life outside the office.

TT: Tell us a bit about your journey to MIT

I grew up in Chennai, India, and I was always fascinated by how things work, so engineering was a natural path. I visited my mother in the U.S. during my summer vacation when she was a researcher as a part of the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program. I decided to stay back in the US to pursue my undergraduate degree at U.C. Berkeley in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, after transferring from SFSU (San Francisco State University).

When I was a rising senior, I applied for a summer internship at a wireless company to work on low-power electronics—but I was not selected for it. Fortunately, my academic advisor, the late Professor Robert Brodersen, did offer me a summer internship (equivalent to a UROP at MIT). More than 20 years later, the profound impact of that experience inspired me to create the SuperUROP program at MIT, which allows students to publish papers in top journals. What I saw at MIT was that students got great experiences, but if you want to publish something, it requires a sustained research experience. So, in many ways, being rejected for that outside internship was one of the best things that happened to me!

TT: Did you always want to come to MIT?

For graduate school, I applied to Berkeley and MIT. I was rejected by MIT. I remember being on a call with the MIT graduate office. I was emotional about the rejection—I think I cried—but they were very kind and gave me good advice and valuable support even then. Fortunately, Berkeley did accept me. Ultimately, the doctoral work I did with my advisor on low-power CMOS digital design (the same topic I applied for an undergraduate internship and was rejected) became one of the most cited papers of the prestigious IEEE Journal of Solid-State Circuits.

I applied for faculty positions broadly and had several job offers. It turned out that I was not the top selection for the department for a new hire, but eventually they did offer me a job, and I started a whole new chapter.

As you can see, you need a bit of luck in life. And never forget that, when a door closes on you, that if you keep looking for other doors, one of them will open. I am so very fortunate to have ended up at MIT. Don't take being at MIT and what it can do for you for granted!

TT: How do you think the world's perception of MIT as an institution of higher learning and its reputation as a leader in research changed over time? In what ways has it stayed the same?

The reputation of MIT has never been stronger. MIT is a place that the world counts on to deliver high-quality solutions to the most challenging societal problems. While that feels like a given here in 02139, the further away you go from Cambridge, the bigger the appreciation for MIT's impact. The broad-based access to the internet has made MIT innovations and education available more easily. Creating open-source knowledge in the future, and it is fortunately core to MIT's DNA.

TT: The initiatives you've helped to start or chaired span a range of fields—climate, AI, hardware, health, entrepre-

neurship, graduate and undergraduate education, and so on. How do you keep up with modern developments in all of these avenues?

My job as dean has a fantastic built-in mechanism for keeping up with the most exciting innovations across the Institute, which is that I lead or sit on the review panels for faculty promotion cases across the whole Institute. These are younger faculty members, seeking to go from “assistant professor” to “associate professor without tenure”, or, later on, seeking to get tenure or full professor status. When those cases get presented, you hear about their work, and it's just incredible.

Another source of energy and inspiration for me is my interactions with the outside world and the intuitions I get about where the world needs impactful solutions. This is why it's so valuable for all of us here to engage with external stakeholders, including [MIT] Corporation members, industry leaders, academic leaders, government officials, etc.

Finally, being actively involved in research is critical to understanding the latest trends. My research as an administrator is better and more impactful than being a faculty member, because you get to understand better what having an impact means.

MIT takes pride in leading rather than following. So, you must be willing to take risks. This is what drives my approach for selecting areas to work on.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT TORRES

Dean of Engineering Anantha Chandrakasan.

TT: Could you tell us about some of the research your group is working on?

Right now, my lab works a lot on ingestible electroceuticals with Professors Gio Traverso and Bob Langer. There's research on an electrical pill that you swallow which can detect pathogens in your stomach with electrical stimulation. We do the security electronics for that, because it turns out you can hack into that.

Another thing we did was cochlear implants. Cochlear implants have a microphone on the outside, and it transmits acoustic signals inside wirelessly. But we built it so you don't need an outside unit and built it so that you don't need a battery—we harvested energy from the inner ear.

TT: How has being an educator today changed compared to when you first joined MIT's faculty?

When I started as a junior faculty member at MIT, the focus was much more on the core of teaching and research. Now, there is a broader sense of community building and connecting across the Institute. While it is still possible to stay in your lane and be successful, there are many more opportunities now to collaborate across units on education and research. Look at the cross-cutting publications that are coming up and how many people are collaborating because of the tools you need!

The way to have impact is to work across boundaries. That's why I create many of the cross cutting programs. So one challenge is, how do you get to know people? I don't think we give enough opportunities for people to discover each other across departments. We can do more to facilitate this as an administration.

How Chandrakasan was almost not our Dean...

As Dean Chandrakasan mentioned, he was not the top pick for the faculty position opening in 1994. It was Dr. Andrea Goldsmith, now Princeton University's Dean of Engineering and Applied Science. Both attended graduate school at U.C. Berkeley, but did not know of each other until their graduation, where they sat next to each other by chance. Here, they recount how they met.

Dean Goldsmith: Dean Chandrakasan and I were talking at graduation about our future plans. I did not know he had applied to MIT until that conversation, when he told me that his MIT offer depended on whether or not I turned them down.

Dean Chandrakasan: Essentially, it was a chance meeting and sitting next to each other at graduation! We met, and I shared I was in the running but

waiting for the candidate. You shared that was you.

Dean Goldsmith: When I learned during our graduation conversation that my choice would allow Dean Chandrakasan to accept his top choice of faculty positions, I was thrilled for him. We were both just about to start our academic careers.

MIT could not have made a better choice than to hire Dean Chandrakasan in 1994. I consider him to be one of the most pre-eminent scholars and academic leaders in the world. In particular he has been an outstanding leader and visionary for MIT's School of Engineering, taking it to new heights of research, education, and impact.

Dean Chandrakasan: And Andrea has had a spectacular career—leading wireless communications research from theory to practice as well as leadership in IEEE and academia.

TT: What were your initial thoughts about being named the inaugural Chief Innovation and Strategy Officer?

It is both an honor and privilege to be MIT's inaugural Chief Innovation and Strategy Officer. I only wish my parents were

tunity to bring an “MIT-inside” solution to many problems around the world. The diversity of brilliant students and their global perspectives is one of MIT's core strengths.

It has also been an honor to organize educational programming for policymakers and military leaders in the US, from the United States Special Operations Command to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. We have an important role in educating policymakers on important topics such as AI, cybersecurity, semiconductors, quantum computing, and biotechnology, and I take that responsibility very seriously.

TT: How did your parents and upbringing influence your choice of career? Do you continue to be inspired by them in what you do today?

Without a doubt, my parents had a huge influence on me. My mother, a biochemist, brought me to her lab often to see her perform experiments, and she talked about advancing science all the time. I will never be able to match her energy and her hard work ethic. She published important work related to collagen and wound healing.

My father had an impact on my systems thinking: his mechanical intuition was remarkable and always helped me visualize solutions. He ran a factory for sheet metal fabrication. But more than anything, he was incredibly kind, and that is an attribute that I continue to strive to emulate.

Of course, when I was a kid, I wanted to be a pilot flying a 747... I used to spend hours in any given day with a Pan-Am toy airplane that my father got me when I was very young.

I've actually flown in an aerobatic aircraft years ago. But, I got so motion sick I haven't flown in one since.

TT: Your office is filled with a lot of trinkets. Can you tell us about some of them?

I actually have a signed 49ers football above my desk over there. It's one of my most prized possessions!

The picture hanging on my wall over there is a pill from my research. The pill is designed to be swallowed and once inside the body, be able to detect pathogens.

TT: For fun, what does a day in your life look like?

I am a huge sports fan. Particularly, a 49ers football fan. This is no surprise given I was studying in the Bay Area when they were winning championships. The 49ers definitely rank higher in my priority list than MIT or any of my academic pursuits!

TT: Favorite meal or snack spot in the area?

It used to be Mary Chung. Partly it was the comfort food, but I also remember the times we went there as a family. The staff was always so kind and treated us extremely well. And of course, I miss the days when we had dozens of food trucks at MIT!

THREE QUESTIONS

Minding the Brain: Mehrdad Jazayeri on brain research, the HHMI award, and the growth of neuroscience

Neuroscience is a really big, interdisciplinary field, resembling a giant monster with many legs. Currently, it's at a very interesting stage of development along several directions.

By Mayu Nakano and Karie Shen

Mehrdad Jazayeri, Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at MIT, has recently been named an HHMI Investigator for his research on the mind-brain connection. Earlier in the year, he also received the Vannevar Bush Faculty Fellowship. Both awards are notable for allowing researchers to pursue ambitious projects. Having immigrated from Iran and pursued his academic journey at NYU and the University of Washington, Jazayeri's research at MIT combines cognitive science, neuroscience, and machine learning to connect the biological mechanisms of the brain to the computational capacities of the mind.

Professor Jazayeri sat down with The Tech to share the story of his path to MIT and his visions for the future.

TT: How far back does your interest in neuroscience extend?

Jazayeri: Iran didn't have, at the time, faculty in neuroscience, so I didn't know anything about neuroscience. I was an electrical engineer as an undergrad, but at heart, I wasn't a pure engineer. After finishing my undergrad, I decided to leave the academic environment and go to work, and I had a few years of doing a variety of different things: a few years of carpentry, a few years of farming. The farming years were very formative. During those years, I was able to learn about neuroscience through books that my uncle and others sent from abroad. I didn't necessarily have a direct interest in biology, but I definitely was intrigued by the

mind. I received a bunch of books from my uncle on the topics of neuroscience and consciousness, and that really was the hook. I fell in love.

Everything we do shapes our future experiences one way or the other, depending on the path we take. All of those engineering skills I acquired in Iran have come to really shape the way I think about scientific questions. I want concrete answers. I want quantitative, rigorous explanations. And that's an engineer's mind. I'm not saying it's only engineers that have this mind, but I definitely learned it through that path, and I think that's a really valuable skill.

TT: What does your research process look like, and how does HHMI support it?

Jazayeri: The goal of our department, which is very much aligned with what my lab does, is to understand how the brain gives rise to the mind. We start with research questions such as, ‘How do we think?’ and ‘How do we make sense of the complex world around us?’ Tackling these questions is hard. A key requirement is to do experiments on animals where we can answer these questions mechanistically. But working with animals is challenging.

First, there must be a good justification. Second, even when there is good justification, it is hard to know what animals are thinking since we cannot talk to them. So we come up with creative ways to teach them how to communicate their thoughts. When we have a suitable animal model, we start looking into what

the brain does by recording the activity of tiny neurons inside their brain. The most challenging step comes next when we try to connect signals in the brain to the computations of the mind. Neurons communicate with one another using obscure electrochemical signals. Trying to understand what they say is like breaking a secret code. We tackle this problem by building computational models. These models let us use the language of mathematics to decipher the code. Finally, we must validate our models and hypotheses. Sometimes, things work out nicely. Most other times, the validation step proves us wrong and forces us to go back to the drawing board. And that cycle continues. We are getting now to some really deep and interesting cognitive aspects of behavior at the level of neurons. Some of these problems are really hard to solve and require that you don't have to be bound by day-to-day productivity. It requires white space. HHMI has always been amazing at recognizing this need and giving the support, community, and infrastructure to answer difficult scientific questions.

TT: What are you looking forward to in this field?

Jazayeri: Neuroscience is a really big, interdisciplinary field. It's one giant monster with many legs and it's at a very interesting stage along several directions. The need for modeling is very, very clear now. People who think from an engineering or mathematical perspective, including many of my colleagues at MIT, think deeply from that perspective.

When I was a PhD and postdoc, the existing technology allowed us to record two, three, four neurons a week. Now, any student in my lab can record hundreds of neurons a day. So that means that you now can ask really difficult questions and have the data to test complex models and hypotheses.

Another big advance is our ability to build models at scales that they can mimic behavior, thanks to the advances in the past decade in machine learning and artificial intelligence. Making measurements inside the brain is challenging, so if you have a good model of the system, then you can pressure test your analyses and investigations using those models. The advances in technology and our ability to build realistic, large-scale models that display natural behaviors are key to helping mathematics do its magic.

I remain deeply curious, and there's a ton of questions that I want to answer. But as I'm getting older, I'm also realizing that my life is limited. I feel inspired to motivate others and train others to keep the flag going, because I feel like they can multiply the objective in a much more effective way than I can do personally.

One thing at the core of my DNA is that I enjoy the process of discovery more than the goal. The key is to have a curious mind that wants to find the truth more than the truth itself. You know you have it if you go to bed thinking about it, wake up thinking about it, and you don't get tired. These people get their teeth into the heart of the problem and they really enjoy what they're doing.

WANTED

noun: sports writers
journalists who write about sports.

No prior experience needed! Just an interest in sports. And probably writing.

Sol. to R&R from page 8

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2024-2025 MIND AND HAND BOOK

The Mind and Hand Book is the official guide to MIT's expectations of all undergraduate and graduate students, including the policies on academic integrity, alcohol, drugs, hazing, and sexual misconduct.

handbook.mit.edu

Memorial display and service remember lives lost in October 7 attack

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the magnitude of loss, the hostage crisis, and the value of resilience.

To remember the lives lost on October 7th, the memorial display had 1300 red flowers on Kresge lawn that symbolized the 1300 individuals who died that day. The display also featured an art installation of small, scorched wooden ballerinas to remember those killed in the Nova Music Festival massacre.

To commemorate the 101 hostages still in captivity, 101 yellow ribbons along with the pictures of the hostages were hung from wires. Other art posters displayed around the Kresge lawn encompassed the three themes, with some depicting mourning while others illustrated strength within the Jewish community.

Planning for the memorial display required special considerations: concerns of vandalism were raised by the Division of Student Life, Campus Activities Complex, and MIT Police. Consequently, the memorial display was taken down every night and then set up again in the morning to prevent overnight vandalism of the display.

“It was a massive undertaking,” Bechhofer said. “17 art prints needed to be brought in. There were a lot of hanging elements, and two central display pieces also needed to be brought in.” Other measures were taken to minimize the risk of vandalism, including the use of flame retardant for flammable materials and moisture resistant coating for the art posters.

According to Bechhofer, people found the display to be deeply moving and meaningful. “I’ve received messages from people telling me that they passed by it and were really touched,” Bechhofer said.

The memorial service

In addition to the display, a memorial service on Oct. 7 was hosted in the Kresge Little Theater. The service, like the display, centered on three themes: remembering the past, resilience in the present, and rebuilding the future. According to Rabbi Menachem Altein, who runs Chabad at MIT, the painful undertones of the service were palpable because “everyone knows somebody [affected by October 7th].”

The service started with video clips and pivoted to speeches with interludes of music. Some students spoke of their “high school friends who were killed” to honor their memory. Others, like Almog Hillel ’25, played the piano and sang. Rabbi Joel Dinin of MIT Hil-

lel led a prayer for the departed, honoring the memory of those who are gone, but certainly not forgotten.

In the context of this service, Rabbi Altein reflected on the challenges that Jewish and Israeli students currently face on campus. He lamented that individual students have reported

can all turn to for support in times of need,” they said.

DovBer notes that October 7th has had a “mixed” impact on interactions with people outside of the Jewish community. They recalled a conversation last fall in which someone was “afraid to talk to someone in their lab



KATE LU - THE TECH

A display on Kresge Oval put up by MIT Jews for Palestine advocates for the freedom of Palestine, Saturday, Oct. 19.

feeling “scared to leave their dorms” or, more generally, “ostracized.”

Despite this, he remains hopeful, urging affected members of the MIT community to not “live in the dark” when they can “brighten the room” instead. In a speech delivered on the behalf of a student who was sick and could not attend, Rabbi Altein shared how they had felt very isolated even before October 7th. Yet, this past year has been a blessing for them, with their life improving “for the better.” Additionally, at the end of the service, charity boxes were handed out to attendees, providing an outlet for them to “start off [each] day with [a small act of] kindness.” He also highlighted the role of various professors, who have offered a “shoulder to cry on” and provided “actual, tangible help for classes and exams.”

A year after October 7th

For MITIA Education Director, henceforth referred to as DovBer, October 7th significantly hurt the Jewish community at MIT. Despite this, they tried to focus on the resilience and the community that formed from this event. “The community has really been one that we

group” because of their Jewish identity and of Israel’s role in the war. In that situation, DovBer then opened up, stating that they were also Jewish. “Everybody is a person,” DovBer said. They hope that people find ways to connect despite political differences.

Like DovBer, Bechhofer found October 7th to be “really hard” for the community. “I didn’t know anyone killed or taken hostage, but seeing that happening to my country and people was a punch in the gut,” Bechhofer said. Around this period, she noted that many people were struggling mentally; some did not even have “the mental energy to get food.”

To address the issue, some MIT faculty members began weekly community lunches to provide a safe space for people to speak openly and collectively process their emotions. These lunches were funded by the MIT administration. “What arose was a beautiful community to lean on each other for support,” Bechhofer said.

Rabbi Dinin also observed this positive transformation, stating that the lunches at first focused on the emotional trauma of October 7th, but over time shifted to a place for con-

structive community building. “Now, students come up and share their research and interests. It’s really beautiful,” Rabbi Dinin said.

Rabbi Dinin views the impact of October 7th on the MIT Jewish community as a spectrum. He noted that some people perceive the attack as a major event that “still affects them deeply” to this day, while other Jews oppose Zionism and Hillel’s stance on Israel. Rabbi Dinin highlighted that there are many who are pained by the war in Gaza, but also support Israel at the same time.

A recent event illustrating the Jewish community’s spectrum of beliefs regarding the Israel-Hamas war is the existence of different sukkahs (temporary huts) on campus during the week-long Jewish holiday of Sukkot from Oct. 16-23. Hillel had a sukkah by the Religious Activities Center at Bexley Garden, while Chabad’s was on a pickup truck by the Student Center.

On the other hand, the MIT Jews for Collective Liberation (JLC) set up a sukkah on Kresge Oval decorated with protest messages about the crisis in Palestine including “Free Jabalia.” Rabbi Dinin sees the JLC’s sukkah as a symbol of “ritual and protest.” Although Rabbi Dinin shares different views from the JLC, he respects their sukkah and believes that they have the right to use the space.

In light of this complexity, Rabbi Dinin aspires to make MIT Hillel an inclusive space for Jewish students who may not connect with Hillel’s belief in the State of Israel. “We try to create opportunities to have those nuanced conversations,” Rabbi Dinin said. Likewise, Rabbi Dinin’s goal is to make sure that MIT Hillel’s programming is a balance of Israel-related events and events focused on Jewish traditions such as weekly Shabbat dinners.

Looking ahead to the rest of the semester and academic year, DovBer and Bechhofer emphasized the importance of building bridges and developing empathy across the political divide. “Remember that the victims were people and the display was about human suffering,” Bechhofer stated. “I really hope that we can look past politics and recognize the shared humanity of each other.”

Rabbi Altein echoed this sentiment, expressing his hope for a united MIT, one that can come together despite its “different backgrounds” and “different traumas,” since “[all of MIT are] G-d’s children.” He emphasized the importance of open dialogue and remained optimistic, pointing out that while MIT’s motto is mens et manus—mind and hand—“everyone has got a heart, too.”

TECH’s PICKS: ENTERTAINMENT THIS ISSUE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24 – WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

FILM

CONCLAVE
(FRI, OCT 25)



VENOM: THE LAST DANCE
(FRI, OCT 25)



TV

THE MARLOW MURDER CLUB (SUN, OCT 27)



OLIVIA RODRIGO: GUTS WORLD TOUR (TUE, OCT 29)



FILM

HERE
(FRI, NOV 1)




MY DEAD FRIEND ZOE
(FRI, NOV 1)



VIDEO GAMES

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 6
(FRI, OCT 25)



LIFE IS STRANGE: DOUBLE EXPOSURE (TUE, OCT 29)

