

THE
MAGNOLIA
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Every time there's a lull in the conversation, Maryam rushes to fill it. It doesn't matter what we were talking about earlier or what we are currently doing, without fail, the same prompt comes up.

"Okay, guys. Top three artists."

Cooper's response is usually between a loud groan and a snarky laugh, if not both, just because of the frequency at which we all hear this question. Over time, it has become a bit of a joke.

But it shouldn't be. However cheesy the ice-breaker may seem, the question comes from a place of genuine interest and care.

Stop us if you have heard this before, but music is the universal language and the ultimate connector. Your tastes might differ from your peers, strangers or even friends and family, but almost everyone you know listens to music.

Maryam's exercise is not just a peek into someone's Spotify for the past week, but it is an exploration of who they are, what they care about and how they feel. It's not just a surface-level question, but a true attempt to understand one another.

When it comes to music, people tend to underestimate Winston-Salem. We hear Wake Forest students complain about having to drive to Charlotte or Raleigh to see an artist they care about, how there is no music culture in the city or how campus homogenizes any creative outlets.

This couldn't be further from the truth. The artists who live here and the melodies they share with the community deserve to be



heard and recognized. Whether it's at a Trade Street brewery, at The Ramkat or in the bins of a used-record shop, Winston-Salem is full of people who want to keep the music playing.

As you read this edition of *The Magnolia*, you will realize the City of Arts & Innovation has earned its name fair and square. Music is deeply embedded in the city's history and culture. We hope you will look past the surface level, and understand what music means to Wake Forest, what it means to Winston-Salem and what it means to all of us.

Maryam Khanum ('24)

Cooper Sullivan ('24)

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ON THE RECORD

MANKAPRR CONTEH

**INTERVIEWED BY
HUNNIYA AHMAD ('27)**



**Mankaprr Conteh and her dog, Dolph
(Photo courtesy of Mankaprr Conteh)**

Wake Forest alumna Mankaprr Conteh ('17) is a staff writer at Rolling Stone, where she mostly covers hip-hop, R&B, African pop music, and occasionally comedians. After receiving a Bachelor's degree in politics and journalism at Wake Forest, she attended the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, which included a stint at Vogue. Before assuming her current role at Rolling Stone in 2021, she worked as a fellow, writer and administrative assistant at Pitchfork.

The following interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

You currently work as a staff writer for Rolling Stone, specializing in the music industry. What made you fall in love with music? What about storytelling?

I fell in love with music on a couple of different levels. I'm an only child so I spent a lot of time by myself. When I was six years old, one of the first presents that I remember getting was a boombox. It had a radio tape player and a CD player on it. I put a butterfly sticker on the top. I just loved West. I loved reading through the booklets. I loved printing out lyrics, putting them in the shower and singing and memorizing songs. Music kept me company. Television-wise, I watched a lot of VH1 and music documentaries. I loved the decade series where they would talk about pop culture each year and so much of that landed in music. I love watching people explain their opinions about music.

Then storytelling, I like people. I love talking to people. People are so interesting and beautiful. I spend a lot of time in my head, and I like being able to connect with other people. It makes me feel less alone. I've also loved a good sentence for a long time. When you read a good sentence or

you hear adult lyrics in rap just two bars you're...wow. It's cool that you put that together, and I wanted to do that too.

That's a beautiful connection to your work. How did you discover that you could combine all of those things into a career in music journalism?

I was a politics major at Wake Forest. I came in for the journalism minor and wasn't patient enough with it, ended up dropping it and focusing on things like international development and education. I took a politics class with Dr. Melissa Harris-Perry, and it was on Black liberation movements. At the time she had a show on MSNBC where she was doing just that — she was combining politics and music. She would talk about Beyoncé in these intricate Black feminist ways, and that is when I realized that I didn't have to abandon this new goal of doing justice-oriented work. I could combine it with writing about music.

When Beyoncé's "Lemonade" came out in April of 2016, [Harris-Perry] was an editor at Elle.com, and she was convening this round table of Black women to reflect on the film and the album. My best friend Kamri Wilborn and I locked ourselves in the business school, we watched it on a projector and we just wrote. I was able to reflect on slavery, Hurricane Katrina and the African diaspora through this Beyoncé album. That is when I realized that I could write about music in an intentional, connected and political way.

Are there any other ways that Wake Forest helped you grow to get where you are today?

In every way. Melissa Harris-Perry also created a program that I got to be

the test subject for called the Elle.com Scholars. I worked directly with Elle [Magazine] editors. We went to New York. We wrote and did podcasting. Some of those relationships helped me land an internship at Vogue. Dr. Sherry Wood was working in the Department of Communication at that time, she wrote my recommendation and helped me write a story for Elle.com about activists in Charlotte after a man was killed by the police, where I shadowed how their community was trying to orient themselves and take care of themselves while trying to do this very important work. I credit so much of my career in music journalism to connections and experiences that I had at Wake Forest.

Since Wake Forest is a predominantly white institution, how was your experience here socially and academically regarding race? Did that shape how you engage with journalism?

That's one of the things that led me to decide that I was going to primarily write about Black people because being Black at Wake Forest was probably the most significant time I ever had to think about my race consciously every day. I grew up in an environment that was not as white or wealthy as Wake Forest. I didn't see the type of money up close that I saw at Wake Forest, and I think that all those things stratified people. My salvation at Wake Forest was being in a close-knit Black community — a Black sorority. It just became such a central part of my identity. This was the peak of Black Lives Matter, so George Zimmerman's trial for killing Trayvon Martin was rolling out

while I was starting at Wake Forest. I think that Black people are dope, and I'm so grateful to be Black, and I want my work to sit in that.

What are your thoughts on the current future of the industry with all the layoffs occurring?

It's a really tough time. A lot of my peers in the industry have been laid off recently. There are some people for whom music journalism is the only thing that they want to do. It's wonderful to have people that have passion. For me, it made me think "Why do I write?" It comes back to people. There are so many ways that you can center people, storytelling and connection in your work, but I think that journalism is particularly important because it helps us understand what is happening around us. Especially now, the industry and the world have moved to a place where opinions trump fact. There needs to be a foundation of facts to build solid opinions on top of. The erosion of journalism, particularly music journalism, is that music journalists add context to the art. It's not all about how good this album is. Where did this artist come from? What does this represent? What does this reflect about us? It's scary to see the opportunities and places for that work to happen diminish.

How is your work and experience with Black artists helping advocate for broader equality outside the music industry?

Sometimes you're writing about an artist like Fela Kuti whose legacy is directly in bureaucratic structures and reflecting on them. I

think more largely that it's important for people to understand the psychological and emotional toll of being a person in the world. Some of those are particular to the Black experience. It's useful to just see people as people. Being able to tell a story about how someone arrived at the art that they

"... music journalists add context to the art. It's not all about how good this album is. Where did this artist come from? What does this represent? What does this reflect about us?"

made and who they are just helps us all understand each other more and see each other as worthy of justice through the lens of fairness and equality.

How do you think the success of Black artists in the modern music industry relates to the push for

equality for Black people, especially with people that you've worked with like Megan Thee Stallion, SZA, etc. and even people you've talked about in this interview like Kanye?

There are different layers, right? The surface layer level of representation matters. Seeing someone who looks like you, who has experienced things like you or who reflects things that you and your friends like or do can make you feel like certain things are possible. Take Megan Thee Stallion, for example. For her to be as successful as she is and still be a victim of gender-based violence and suffer under the psychological burden of all that is impactful. It's a microcosm of the types of gender-based violence and intimate violence that happen all the time everywhere. She is brave enough to talk about it and advocate for herself over and over again. It's impactful. That is important for survivors and potential allies. If she didn't reach the level of success that she did, her story would also not reach as many people as it did.

Are there any artists who have shaped your understanding of music journalism, music in general or being Black in the industry?

I wrote Janelle Monae's cover for Rolling Stone in June of last year, and I think about this thing that she said all the time. Her album was called "The Age of Pleasure." It was Grammy nominated, and she was in the process of getting ready to roll it out while we were talking. She had reoriented her life around pleasure. She would have meetings with her team as she runs the label, and if things would get tense or testy or anxious, she would ask: Are we living in plea-

sure? That ethos of pleasure. That could sound potentially dismissive, but I think it's radical to reimagine your life and think "I would rather it be this way, and I will make it so." That was a formative experience for me.

I've researched Janelle Monae as well. Her ability to talk about certain things like Black futurism within her art in such a digestible way for the audience to understand it — like cyber-based stuff — was impactful for me.

She was able to engage in talking about Black futurism and different ideas of Black futurity that are not talked about in music because I think a lot of people have this preconceived notion about Black music. Black rap is seen as vulgar or only about certain topics, and she's able to broaden that scope beautifully. I like "The Age of Pleasure," as she leaned into more vulgarity and sexuality. This is also an important part of us. This has always been a part of me. One of the reasons why I got into music journalism is that there is a time for fighting, and we all must try, but there's also a time for joy and pleasure. I like how they balance all of that in their work.

How does your experience as a Black woman in the journalism industry relate to the things you've seen with artists and shape your experience within the professional world?

So much of my Black womanhood has to do with my Africanness. Being able to see African music rising is important. We have artists like Ira Starr and Ephrem Amare becoming pop stars. Being able to connect and see them more intimately from my

vantage point has been beautiful. Much of my studies at Wake Forest revolved around feminism and Black feminism, going back to why I do this. It makes you feel so much more connected when you can understand someone from their vantage point, and hear who they are and what they're going through in their music. For example, I wrote this 21 Savage cover, and he's not a woman, but he was talking about women sexually based on heteronormative ideas in a way that I was able to challenge. Of course in a respectful way, but the album "Her Loss" was misogynistic. It was difficult as a Black woman music journalist, to both hold the validity of that work and also concerns around that work and then engage with the artist. Sometimes it's not even about what women are saying, it's

about being a woman and having a woman's perspective, and inserting my perspective as a woman on what men are saying in music too.

What do you hope to accomplish in the next few years?

A lot of my goals are not necessarily about being a concrete professional. I think it's more so in the vein of Janelle Monae — what kind of life do I want to live? My goals are to work in environments that feel communal, different from work environments that are about more than the work than you as a person. I'd like to continue to facilitate that wherever I go.



Photo courtesy of Mankaprr Conteh

WAKERADIO



88.5 WFDD

THE DEACONLIGHT SHINING

Photos
taken by
Jackie
Sparnicht
and Sophie
Fionda

Addison Schmidt ('25)

Just behind Kentner Stadium is a corner of campus that few students venture to regularly. Each weekday, environmental program students and anthropology majors spill out of their department's respective homes, isolated from Wake Forest University's other academic buildings. Athletes trek to the Miller Center. Pickleball players head to the courts. Those who find themselves in this unusual corner of campus are greeted by a strange sight if they look up.

There, two large satellite dishes and a silver tower loom behind a pale yellow farmhouse. The tiny shuttered house looks a bit out of place on a campus renowned for its Virginian brick. This building isn't a small-town dentist's office, though. Since 1991, it has been the home of Winston-Salem's local National Public Radio (NPR) affiliate station: WFDD.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, most employees only come in three days a week. On the day I visit, only a few employees, including radio engineer George Newman, reporter April Laissle and local "Morning Edition" host Neal Charnoff are there as Molly Davis, assistant station manager and WFDD employee since 2005, shows me around.

The rest of the farmhouse is home

to three recording studios, an engineering room filled with ceiling-high radio transmitting technology and storage closets.

Each studio is used differently depending on size and availability, although all three can broadcast directly over the air. WFDD's broadcast schedule currently consists of a mix of local and national NPR content throughout the waking hours and classical music from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m., at which point "BBC World Service" begins the day.

The farmhouse is the office of some, but not all, of WFDD's approximately 20 employees. Others work in offices on Reynolds Boulevard inside of the University Corporate Center, a large glass-paned building about a two-mile drive down busy University Parkway from Wake Forest's campus.

At the moment, there are prospective plans to move the station off-campus entirely within the next few years, a move that would further distance the station from its founding body—Wake Forest students.

"Most students don't know we're here," Davis said.

The lack of student awareness about WFDD is perhaps unsurprising on the surface. Not many Wake Forest students are prone to listening to NPR in their free time — at least

not over the radio waves. Yet, others see this disconnect as the result of years of student separation from a station whose name, ironically, is short for Wake Forest Demon Deacons.

In 1946, Wake Forest students Henry Randall and Al Parris illegally aired the first-ever broadcast of what, at the time, was known as W-A-K-E radio from the old campus of Wake Forest College in Wake Forest, NC. Two years later, after brothers David Herring and Ralph Herring Jr. built a transmitter under the direction of WRAL Raleigh's radio engineer, the station received a license from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and changed its name to WFDD. The station aired its inaugural broadcast from Wake Forest, N.C. featuring then-college president Dr. Thurman D. Kitchin.

A year after the station's officially sanctioned establishment, Jack Thomas arrived on the Wake Forest College campus and immediately became involved with the station. Today at 95 years old, Thomas lives in a Winston-Salem retirement community, still regaling the memories from the station's early days. As Thomas recalls, its university-sanctioned founding grew out of the popularity of Randall and Parris' bootleg station,

which could be heard from the girls' dormitory nearby.

By 1949, WFDD was three years removed from Parris and Randall's first escapade into campus radio, and one year into a legally licensed, university-sponsored station. The infrastructure for broadcasting had significantly improved.

"By the time I got there, they had wired the campus," Thomas explained. "There was a telephone wire going through the trees and a microphone in the church."

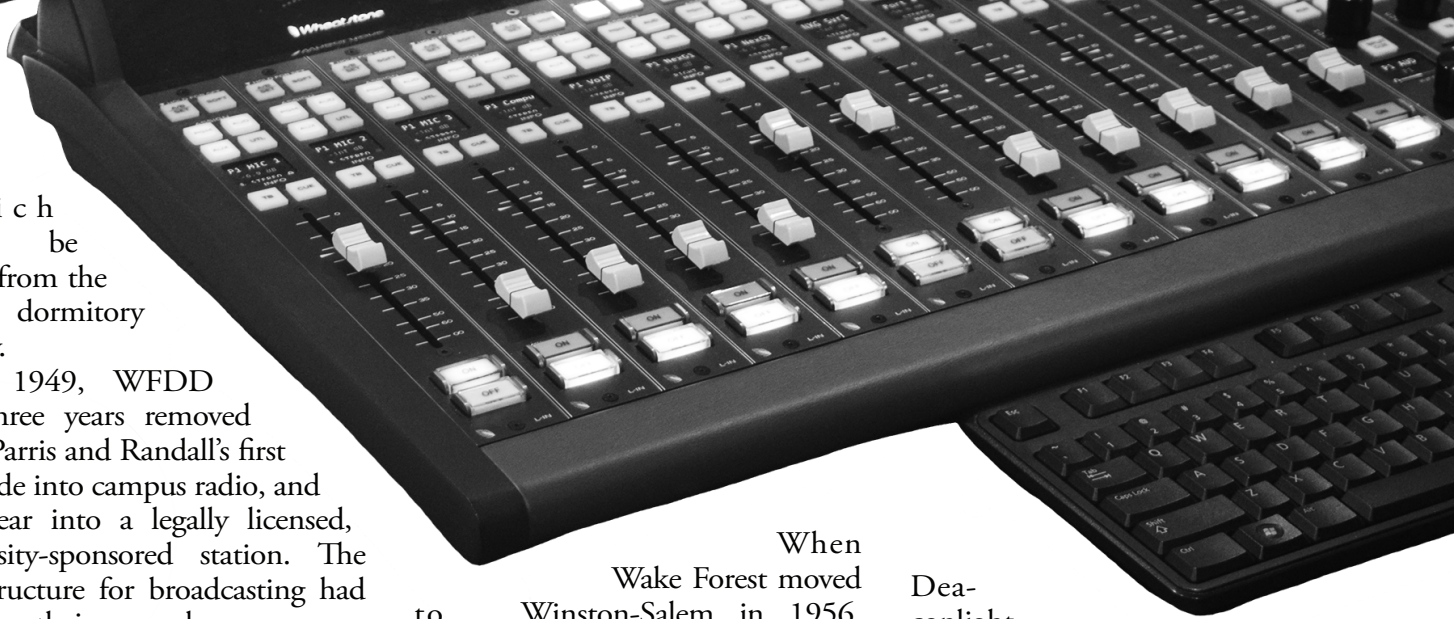
This system of electrical wires allowed WFDD to broadcast both from its control room in an old sorority house just off campus, as well as from the chapel.

Thomas was part of a group of 10 to 15 students who broadcast scripted, pre-recorded and original programs including classical music, educational programming and sports. His interests lay mainly in sports and educational content at that time. He frequently accompanied sports commentators to away games at various schools around the state. There, he manned the equipment and read ads between breaks.

Despite his interest in radio, Thomas was not a music fanatic at the time. He was quite the opposite.

"I was pretty religious then, and I didn't like some of the songs, so I scratched 'em," he admitted regarding some of the records the studio received.

Despite Thomas' misgivings about the station's musical content, it flourished in time. It was during this time that one of WFDD's hallmark shows emerged: Deaconlight Serenade.



When Wake Forest moved to Winston-Salem in 1956, WFDD followed. From 1956 to 1991, the station occupied a significant portion of the third floor of Reynolda Hall. It was in those hallowed halls where Deaconlight saw its heyday.

Over two decades after Jack Thomas graduated from Wake Forest College in 1952, a man by the name of Paul Ingles became involved with WFDD as a sophomore.

"I don't remember having any knowledge of WFDD until we were all packing up to go back home at the end of that freshman year of 1975," Ingles said.

He credits one late-night party in the Kitchin dormitory as his WFDD awakening.

"We were rocking out, and I said 'What is that?'"

Ingles' friend answered: "What else? WFDD!"

Someone along the hall relayed that students could get involved if they took the required radio practicum. In the fall of 1975, Ingles took the class and quickly made friends with upperclassmen involved in the studio, including fellow lifelong journalist Steve Pendlebury, whom he now describes as a close friend of 50 years.

At that time, there were two shows at WFDD hosted exclusively by Wake Forest students: Renaissance, which ran from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., and

Deaconlight, the late-night show that began at 11 p.m. each night and served as Ingles' introduction to the station. Renaissance was a newer production that offered a prime opportunity for student hosts to reach an audience across the Piedmont Triad during "drive time," as Ingles calls it, when radio stations receive the most listeners during the morning commute.

"The only stipulation for [Renaissance] was that it not be rocking as hard as Deaconlight rocked, so you had to pick acoustic artists and keep it kind of mellow," Ingles recalled.

At that time, Pendlebury was the host of Renaissance. Following his enrollment in the radio practicum class, Ingles quickly began accompanying Pendlebury in the studio during the show.

"Sometime in the fall, after I'd only been in [the radio practicum] class for a week or two, Steve let me sit with him," Ingles said, "And I never left."

After passing the on-air announcing test that required pronouncing and memorizing various classical composers due to the show's daytime classical content, Ingles was primed to take over a Deaconlight slot. Beginning in the fall of 1976, he began hosting the Sunday night Deaconlight every week until his graduation in May 1978. On air, he

was known mainly for his fondness for Southern California rock artists like Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Jackson Browne and Joni Mitchell.

“Everybody leaned in one direction or the other [music wise],” Ingles said, “It was an environment where the student staff was like hanging out at your best friend’s house because everybody was sampling music, the records came in for free and they’d pile up in the student station office where people would just sit there listening for the first time to great albums.”

While the studios created a sense of community for Ingles, working at WFDD wasn’t all fun and games for the students involved.

Under the leadership of Dr. Julian Burroughs, the station’s first non-student manager and a former classmate of Thomas’s on the old campus, WFDD became the first NPR affiliate station in North Carolina in 1970. As a result, students like Ingles were given the opportunity to develop radio journalism skills at a professional-level station with a 36,000-watt transmitter that reached dozens of counties across North Carolina.

After graduating from Wake Forest

in 1978, Ingles moved to Charlotte and worked as a news reporter for an AM radio station, a moderator for a local TV news station, a sports reporter for a second AM station and, finally, a program director for a small classic rock station.

Ingles saw lots of parallels between his role at the classic rock station and WFDD.

“We turned [that station] into classic rock radio, which played a lot of the rock bands and the album cuts,” Ingles said, “And that’s what we were doing at WFDD on our own as students.”

After his self-described “good luck streak” ended with the sale of that station in Charlotte, Ingles moved to Albuquerque, N.M. where he worked as a guest announcer, then Cleveland, Ohio, in classic rock again. He then moved back to Albuquerque where he eventually landed a role as a production director for the NPR affiliate associated with the University of New Mexico.

Following his exit from public radio in 2002, Ingles began working as a freelance audio reporter for news and music-related stories. He also

began hosting a self-made podcast called “Peace Talks Radio,” which continues today. In October 2023, he started broadcasting his own internet radio station from his garage with a self-established goal to never repeat a song until the total number reached 10,000.

“[The station] is Deaconlight 20 hours a day and two hours a day we play ‘Peace Talks Radio’ episodes and two hours a day we play some of my music documentaries,” Ingles said. “I want to live the dream of making a radio station that sounds like Deaconlight.”

As Paul Ingles began his senior year in the fall of 1977, another WFDD student legend, DD Thornton, arrived at Wake Forest as a freshman.

A Winston-Salem area native, Thornton’s ties to Deaconlight were firmly rooted by the time she arrived on campus a year earlier than scheduled, beginning her freshman year as her friends were starting their senior year of high school.

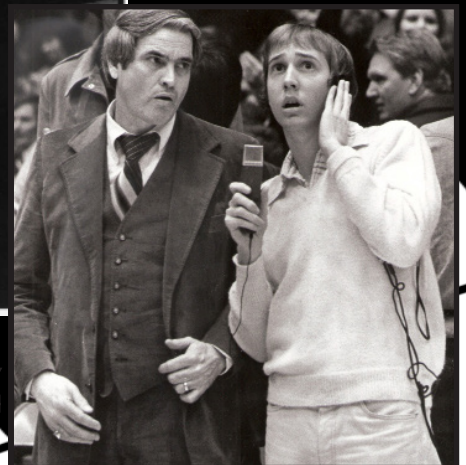
“You got to go back to when I was in high school,” Thornton said. “I used to listen to Deaconlight every



**Paul Ingles (left) at WFDD
(Courtesy of Paul Ingles)**



**DD Thornton at WFDD, 1981
(Courtesy of DD Thornton)**



**Paul Ingles (right) interviews Carl Tacy
(Courtesy of Paul Ingles)**

night, or most every night, when it came on at 11 o'clock."

Despite her love for Deaconlight, Thornton wasn't initially interested in radio as a career.

"My freshman year, I wasn't thinking so much about Deaconlight," she said. "I was thinking about becoming a lawyer or something."

Yet, the pull toward radio was strong and Thornton couldn't stay away. After enrolling in the radio practicum course and passing the announcing test, she hosted her first-ever Deaconlight show on Dec. 13, 1977. In the fall of 1978, Thornton discovered the new wave band DEVO.

"After [playing the first DEVO song], I just started getting more interested in all this new stuff coming in," she remembered.

In time, students began playing new wave bands regularly on Deaconlight, particularly on Fridays and Saturdays when the show ran until 3 a.m. While they were initially met with complaints, there were soon listeners calling in with requests for more, Thornton recalls. A new era had begun at Deaconlight, but it quickly came crashing down.

Burroughs, the aforementioned WFDD faculty advisor, decided to retire from his role at the station at the conclusion of the 1980-81 school year. Around the same time, student announcers hosted their first-ever fundraising drive for the station, raising around \$20,000 to support WFDD's operations and programming.

In the fall of 1981, a new station manager named Pat Crawford arrived. In November, just after student members held their second fundraising drive, it was announced that Deaconlight would be taken off

the air by the end of the year.

Crawford said the cancellation of Deaconlight was unfortunate collateral damage in the station's quest toward professionalization. WFDD had to adopt a program schedule consistent with the network brand and focused on a much larger audience.

"I completely understand why the students initially were not happy with my decision," Crawford said.

Thornton, however, attributes this

"I can go into the studio, play what I want, talk about what these songs mean to me [and] decompress for an hour."

- Rachel Gauthier

to Crawford's dislike of the type of rock music students played on the show.

"He says there are only three types of art and music: classical, folk and jazz. Rock was, in his mind, not art," Thornton said.

Crawford, who has worked at the NPR affiliate WUWF radio in Florida since departing WFDD, denied in clear terms that he ever said anything along those lines, finding the accusation preposterous.

"I can be accused of many things, but being a musical snob isn't one of

them," he said.

Crawford also said that he loves rock music and rock documentaries "to this day."

Back on campus in 1981, students voiced their disagreement with the decision. More than 600 signatures were collected in a petition organized by students, and opinion pieces were published in the Old Gold & Black student newspaper.

According to his WUWF biography page, Pat Crawford left his position at WFDD in 1982. But the decision was final. On Dec. 27, 1981, DD Thornton hosted the last ever Deaconlight broadcast.

As a student at Reynolds High School in the late 70s and early 80s, Paul Garber recalls listening to Deaconlight regularly for its unique sound.

"In the South, we had really regimented, formulaic radio [that] didn't really break the mold very much," Garber said. "Deaconlight completely broke the mold. They didn't care about the mold. There was no mold."

By the time he arrived at Wake Forest in 1982, however, Deaconlight was gone and student flexibility at WFDD had been drastically reduced. A new club, the ongoing student-run station known as WAKE Radio, was formed in its place.

Garber wasn't part of the station's founding but recalls those who faced an uphill battle when it came to WAKE Radio's establishment.

"It was a situation where [students] needed to make a strong argument as to why there needed to be a breakaway station because Wake Forest already had a station," Garber said.

Following the university's ap-



Rachel Gauthier (left) and Paul Garber (right)



proval, WAKE Radio was officially formed and broadcast on a local AM band beginning in 1983. Today, the station broadcasts from the internet, and Garber, who is a reporter for WFDD, is the club's faculty advisor.

"The goal is that I do as little as possible," Garber said. "Because I really strongly believe in the student-run ethos of the station."

One of the student leaders on this year's WAKE Radio executive board is senior Rachel Gauthier, the assistant station manager. Gauthier joined WAKE Radio at the beginning of her freshman year in 2020. It was WAKE Radio that provided her with a sense of community at a time when little else was happening around campus amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

"There was not a lot happening on campus social life-wise, it was kind of dead compared to how it is now," Gauthier recalled. "I still wanted to have things to do and look forward to every week. As someone who's always really loved listening to music and playing music, WAKE radio kind of seemed like the perfect fit for me."

Since then, aside from her one semester abroad, Gauthier has maintained her 8 p.m. Friday showtime. While some people make themes for each of their shows, Gauthier said she tends to keep hers "pretty

eclectic." In addition to community and friendships, Gauthier sees her shows as a time to decompress.

"I can go into the studio, play what I want, talk about what these songs mean to me [and] decompress for an hour," she said. "Having this showtime is helpful for me to work through stuff."

Gauthier has been on the WAKE Radio executive board since her sophomore year, having served as the publications manager and the music director before assuming her current role as assistant station manager.

Over the years, Gauthier's involvement and leadership in WAKE Radio have allowed her to watch the club flourish.

"My freshman year there were a lot of blank showtimes," Gauthier said, "This year we've had to develop a mechanism to make sure people are showing up to their shows on time because there are more people who want to have a show on WAKE Radio than there are currently showtimes."

When considering the growth of WAKE Radio over the past four years and its constancy in the 41 years since its founding, it's clear that the club has offered students a space to be undeniably themselves. Students have free reign over what

they choose to play (except the required three "ad" songs per show) and events like semesterly concerts allow space for student hosts to gather in community and student musicians to shine.

Deaconlight was pulled off the air nearly 43 years ago. Its loss was felt across campus and the community and, for many, the opportunities the show provided were pivotal in embarking upon a career path. Today, despite the show's cancellation, the Deaconlight shines on.

On Facebook, DD Thornton, Paul Ingles and other Deaconlight alumni moderate the Deaconlight Virtual Music Bar group, which was founded on December 27, 2007—exactly 26 years after Thornton hosted the final Deaconlight broadcast. As of publication, the group boasts more than 1,300 members who share posts like videos of live performances and memories from their Wake Forest days.

On campus at Wake Forest, WAKE Radio alum Paul Garber teaches a radio journalism course and watches from a distance as dozens of WAKE Radio student hosts plug in their phones and queue up Spotify playlists each week. Records, cassette tapes, CDs, show titles and leaders have come and gone, but the music remains.

MALACHI WOODARD

Jessica Barry ('27)

On a Wednesday evening in April 2019, T-Pain took the stage in front of an electric crowd at LJVM Coliseum for Wake Forest's annual spring concert. He performed his signature hits, including "I'm 'n Luv," "Buy U a Drank" and "Low," while moonwalking and robot-ing across the temporary stage on the basketball court. For many attendees, T-Pain's concert offered a dose of nostalgia for their high school days — the last time they danced to T-Pain on a gym floor.]

Except for Malachi Woodard, a high school junior and Wake Forest hopeful visiting his sister.

"To see him live here was, I guess destiny," Woodard said. Now a Wake Forest senior, Woodard is involved in nearly every aspect of music on campus.

Woodard grew up in the small town of Denver, North Carolina where he was always exposed to music. As a young child, he enjoyed trying to mimic singers for fun, which evolved into him taking singing more seriously in his tween years. Woodard joined a music group at his church in middle school, his first foray into performing for an audience. In high school, he became a "choir kid" and got to experiment with both traditional and theatrical singing due to a transition of directors. His mother was a fan of artists such as Beyonce, Usher, Keyshia Cole, and of course, T-Pain. These influences show up in his original music today.

Throughout his years at Wake Forest, Woodard has masterfully juggled his musical ventures with the demands of being a college student. He describes one venture, his original music, as R&B and neo-soul in style, and intent on being authentic and "speak[ing] to something important." As a creative writing minor, Woodard's coursework has strengthened his songwriting ability by forcing him to "work the pen," and clarified his ability to communicate through dabbling in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. His experimentation across a multitude of literary genres allows his lyrics to do the same.

In particular, he has honed his talent to imply meaning without explicitly stating it. This skill can be seen in his songs that embellish mundanity in his lived experiences, a subject matter Woodard believes departs from a lot of today's music,



where listeners often search for a deeper interpretation. Without divulging too much about songs he has in the works, he outlined for me something he wrote while in a cramped, stuffy room without windows — trying to pass the time all alone in this room but with a “cool kind of spin on it.”

He acknowledged his tendency to write quickly and prolifically while seeking something catchy, so much of his original work that has not been fully realized remains in the archives. One song, however, will debut this semester as an arrangement performed by Woodard’s a capella group, Innuendo.

Innuendo, a coed a capella group on campus that primarily covers modern pop music, is helmed by Woodard as its music director. He describes its members as people who are passionate about music, singing and academic rigor, while tied by a close fraternal relationship. In his leadership role, Woodard leads rehearsals and plans song choices, where he must constantly assess the abilities and energy levels of the group to find the perfect fit. His responsibilities as music director multiplied this semester as Innuendo took on the recording of a five-song project to be released next school year. One of the five songs is an original song of his, which will also be performed live at Innuendo’s end-of-year concert.

With palpable gratitude, Woodard gushes to me that “they’ve just been so open to the ideas I had and following through, being able to share [my work] with people for the first time ever.”

Woodard has also been able to flex his creative muscles in the University Gospel Choir. During his freshman year, one of his sister’s

friends in the Gospel Choir invited him to participate in an Easter project with a Grammy and Oscar-nominated composer. He appreciates the consistency of the group and the opportunities to perform at services and Wake Forest “bucket-list” events.

The composer, Joshua Brian Campbell, stayed on to become the Director of Music and Arts at Wake Forest’s School of Divinity. Campbell has become a mentor to Woodard, helping him work through entry points into the music industry. The two also performed in Wake Forest’s production of “Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom.”

Campbell was the music director of “Turning 15,” a musical that tells the story of Lynda Blackmon Lowery, the youngest protester on the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. Because Campbell had been working on the music for several years prior to the production, Woodard went into performance rehearsals already familiar with many of the songs from working on them with the Gospel Choir. Though the a capella style of the songs was in Woodard’s wheelhouse, the delivery was less in his comfort zone.

“It’s fun to switch up the method of output,” he said. “I’m usually on a stage with a band or by myself, but this time I was back in the musical theater type of headspace.”

Woodard relished the opportunity to simultaneously serve as a role model for underclassmen in the production and witness the craft of his Divinity School elders. The fact that Lowery herself came to watch Wake Forest’s theatrical production of her story is not lost on him either.

“Just knowing that this is of the first few times that this production has been seen... to be able to bring that to our community is really important to me as well,” Woodard said.

Yet another musical venture borne from the Gospel Choir is Woodard’s band, Fifth Son. He met Fifth Son’s

drummer, Cameron French, in the Gospel Choir, where he asked if he would be interested in jamming out. The pair instantly linked and took their creative partnership to the next level by adding band members. The other members have come and gone with graduations, but new people have come on board through friendships or connections in the music department.

In recounting their creative process, Woodard mentions that the members of Fifth Son have different musical genres that they gravitate toward, which influences how he approaches music. The group will often jam together and listen out for a common sound emerging. Once a “prevailing vibe” is established, all of the members tap into it and start rocking out from there.

Fifth Son started out with performances at smaller student-led events, including Wake Radio and Wayward Fashion, and has grown to headlining larger university-run events, such as the Brian Piccolo Foundation fundraisers. Woodard appreciates the vast opportunities for small artists to showcase their craft on Wake Forest’s campus, with frequent open mics and many occasions calling for live music. Off-campus gigs have also been highlights for Woodard, with one being a 70s-themed fashion show at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art.

After studying marketing at Wake Forest, Woodard plans to fuse his expertise in that field with his passion for music. Also a visual artist, he hopes to use his digital marketing design skills to create infographics for his own concerts. Between his multifaceted artistic prowess and interpersonal communication abilities, Woodard is certainly well-equipped to enter this industry where, in his words, you “have to beg people to give you attention.”

MUSICAL

MENTORSHIP

Josie Scratchard ('24)



Birds chirp in the light breeze of a bright afternoon. Coveted spring weather knocks on Thursday's door. While students head to their final classes of the day, junior Alyssa Zaepfel's day isn't over.

She inhales her first breath of silence on the bench outside Scales Fine Arts Center and takes in the day's beauty as she thinks of her student Cora Roach. Has she practiced this week? What if she wants to start learning a new piece today? She mentally composes the upcoming lesson while the world stands still for a moment.

Cora and her brother come racing down the Scales pathway with their mother strolling shortly behind. Cora approaches the bench — flute and “Spy School” book in tow — bursting at the seams with energy.

Cora's contagious 11-year-old energy touches Alyssa on a deeper level. Since she started meeting with Cora about a year ago, Alyssa has been able to share one of the greatest joys in her life with someone yearning to grow and explore new interests.

Alyssa's flute has been an extension of her mind and heart since the fourth grade. Playing the instrument has given her lifelong friends and an inspiring mentor. It has taught her integrity, discipline and confidence. It has brought her joy and a sense of belonging.

She would love nothing more than to share the fulfillment the flute has given her with another. Musical Empowerment has provided her with that opportunity.

Executive Director Katie Battle began working for Musical Empowerment about a year and a half ago, at a time when she was looking to take a break from music education. She learned about it when hiring the person taking over her role as a school band and orchestra director

in the North Carolina public school system. The Musical Empowerment program has been providing free, weekly, 40-minute music lessons for K-12 students since 2002 when the program sprang to life at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Spearheaded by Christine Moseley, the then-titled Carolina Music Outreach connected students in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district with college mentors who could teach music to those who could not afford lessons.

Since its origin, Carolina Music Outreach became a national 501(c)(3) organization entitled Musical Empowerment in 2013 and has created chapters at six additional college campuses, including those at NC State University and Wake Forest University. Under national direction, the program has a greater ability to impact students and provide them with the resources to thrive.

“If you're teaching a seven-year-old — which is our youngest student — piano, you're not going to use the same kind of resources a piano student in high school would,” Battle said. “[We get] all of those resources put together and share them with our college mentors, giving them specific things like repairs and proper techniques.”

Battle explained that Musical Empowerment also provides students with free instruments on which they can practice. Instrument donations are collected at both the national and chapter levels — both in the form of currency and instruments themselves — in addition to the funds accrued through their yearly fundraiser, Strike a Chord, in early February.

“Some [chapters] did busking on campus [for Strike a Chord], which is where you go play in public and have a hat out,” Battle said. “Some did bake sales. One did a succulent sale. ... So they do participate in fundrais-

ing, but a lot of the funding comes from grant writing and donors at the national office.”

Battle's eyes lit up as she commented on the impact of Musical Empowerment and, specifically, the mentorship of the college students. The program provides students with the opportunity to contribute to the community by sharing their passion and guidance with younger students in the surrounding school district.

“It's a special thing for Musical Empowerment to have college students as mentors,” Battle said. “The [age] gap between our students in the area and the college students ... is smaller, and a lot of that relationship-building seems to be a lot easier than it would be for somebody who is much older.”

The nature of the mentor-student relationship can create a bond that is often hard to find in other contexts as the program's college mentors allow children to begin learning an instrument in a flexible and comfortable way.

“We're not trying to make Yo-Yo Ma's,” Battle said. “We want [students] to be able to learn in a way that makes sense to them.”

Alyssa walked hesitantly into her first private lesson as a seventh grader shaking and fearful of the instructor in front of her. This was her opportunity to show what she's made of. She lifted her flute to her lips — and she started bawling. Her instructor asked her to play a simple scale, but the pressure was too great.

“I'm one of those perfectionist kids where, if I can't do it perfectly, I'm not gonna do it at all and just shut down,” Alyssa said as she reflected on this memory.

Learning to play music in this setting reaches a new level of vulnerability. As Alyssa recounted, to sit at the foot of someone with remarkable skill in search of guidance can be difficult,

especially when you have a mindset focused on performing well. But at the same time, it creates a remarkable relationship.

“We really developed this awesome friendship and mentorship connection,” Alyssa said. “During every [college vacation break], I still go home and have a lesson with Mrs. Behrens.”

When Alyssa saw an email about Musical Empowerment in her inbox during her sophomore year at Wake Forest, Behrens encouraged her to take the opportunity to share the gift of learning music with someone else.

“[Mrs. Behrens told me I] know how it feels to struggle, and [I] know how to push through that struggle,” Alyssa said. “And that’s an experience you can give to someone else....And then I met Cora.”

“So do you want to show me what you’ve been practicing?”

Alyssa and Cora sit on adjacent piano benches in the tiny practice room in the Scales basement. After chatting excitedly about her dad’s love for hockey and her free time spent reading, Cora plays the first few notes of “Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel” and abruptly stops.

“I think I’m doing it wrong,” she says.

Alyssa leans across the music stand and adjusts Cora’s finger placement

with a motion for her to continue playing. Cora leans away from the studio piano, her long brown hair grazing the keys, and she draws the flute back to her lips. An unhurried, on-pitch tune emits from Cora’s flute. Alyssa’s eyes gleam with satisfaction.

“I have to restrain myself from having an outburst [of triumph] while she’s playing,” Alyssa said about witnessing Cora play well. “I feel her success with her because ... watching her succeed ... I know how it feels to finally get it.”

Alyssa’s teaching style takes a relaxed form. She sits patiently as Cora speaks to her and lets Cora dictate the lesson’s pace.

“I like that she teaches me to take it one step at a time,” Cora said.

A noticeable hallmark of Alyssa’s teaching style is consistent positive reinforcement. Her encouragement keeps the expectations of the lesson to a minimum, allowing for the pair to connect over the instrument in a more meaningful way.

“The lesson is for Musical Empowerment, but it’s also to create that bond,” Alyssa said. “I think [Cora] finds a similar level of satisfaction talking to someone older as I do talking to someone younger. ... We’ll be talking, and then she’ll just go, ‘We need to play.’ She was like, ‘We need to set a timer on how long we can sit

here and talk.”

Cora and Alyssa often go off on tangents, with conversation topics ranging from Cora’s fifth-grade class, to hair dye, to waking up early — but they always manage to return to music. Music forms the foundation of their relationship and provides a medium through which Alyssa and Cora each relate to the world.

“I see the world more musically [now],” Cora said after her lesson. “I end up pretending to play the flute when I hear music sometimes, like when I hear a band playing.”

“I do that, too!” Alyssa said.

Cora brings Alyssa a sense of nostalgia from when she was first mesmerized by music. Cora will join the school band next year, and Alyssa was involved in her school’s band. Cora will play a munchkin in Mount Tabor High School’s production of “The Wizard of Oz,” and Alyssa performed in the pit orchestra for the same play.

“[It was] a full-circle moment because we started lessons almost exactly a year ago, and I started learning the flute in the fourth grade,” Alyssa said. “And she very much reminds me of how I was when I was in fourth grade. She’s very into books. She loves learning. She’s always craving to soak up knowledge like a sponge.”

When Eric Wang applied to Wake



Alyssa Zaepfel



Cora Roach

Forest, he knew he wanted to participate in Musical Empowerment. But as Wang entered a COVID-plagued freshman year, he struggled to find students interested in taking music lessons over Zoom. The Wake Forest chapter had lost its charter, and Wang worked hard to regain it.

“One of the biggest projects of my time in college was helping regain that charter and making people more aware of Musical Empowerment because it kind of died out,” said Wang, the senior co-president of the Wake Forest chapter.

Wang’s commitment to the organization has contributed in large part to its current popularity in the community. While the program has been functioning well, there has been an issue with its mentor recruitment.

“The most challenging part [about Musical Empowerment] is not finding kids from the community, it is finding mentors,” Wang said.

The Wake Forest chapter currently operates with about 20 mentors, but this supply is not enough to meet the community’s demand. Most students attend Speas Global Elementary School, which is about a mile down the road from Wake Forest’s campus.

“Musical Empowerment [lesson availability] fills up so quickly that I have to say [to my students] ‘there are no more teachers this semester,’” said Michael Lauricella, a music and drama teacher at Speas Elementary.

Despite the limited availability, Lauricella has witnessed the impact of Musical Empowerment firsthand. When Wang first contacted Lauricella in an attempt to recruit more students in the wake of COVID-19, Lauricella was more than happy to help repair the damage to the program due to his observation of the impact music has on students.

“You see so many students who might not excel academically or are struggling socially, who are drawn to

music,” Lauricella said. “It gives them a sense of community, a sense of pride. They take ownership of their work, and they’re able to show who they are in a completely different way.”

With Musical Empowerment in particular, Lauricella has seen students who have participated in the program have boosts in their self-esteem in addition to improvements in their leadership skills and their ability to take risks. It is also evident that Musical Empowerment has also impacted the college-aged mentors. Similarly to Lauricella, Wake Forest Musical Empowerment Chapter Junior Co-President MC McCormack has seen the effects of the program in her one-on-one lessons.

“I’m more aware of how much someone’s meaningful, intentional time and thoughtfulness can mean to somebody...” McCormack said. “[My student has] taught me so much more about life and trying to love others.”

After Alyssa sends Cora and her family home for the day, she heads back to Taylor Residence Hall to grab her backpack and go to the library. Walking away with a smile on her face, she recounts the success of the day’s lesson and the direction she wants to go in for the next lesson.

All of Cora’s hard work is leading up to the end-of-semester recital that will be held in Scales. She will have the opportunity to show off her new skill set to all of the mentors and families involved in the program, which is not only the culmination of weeks of practice but also an emotional moment for mentors.

“I’m glad that people are finding the joy that I’m finding in [Musical Empowerment],” Alyssa said about watching other mentors react to their students at the recital. “It is such a special thing to be able

to build a connection with someone younger than you through mentorship in music.”

As the semester comes to a close, graduating seniors will move on to new life stages and commitments, forcing them to stop meeting with their Musical Empowerment mentees. In the simultaneous opening and closing of different chapters of life, mentors like Alyssa can rest easy knowing that they have grown as a person and teacher, and students like Cora have been exposed to the joy of learning to play music. Alyssa may only be a junior, but she enjoys being part of the journey of self-discovery every child faces in their quest for meaning and belonging.

“I want [Cora] to find in life something she has passion for and that makes her feel like she’s working towards the best version of herself that she can be.”



In Harmony

Wake Forest alumnus Alexander Lloyd Blake ('10) reflects on his journey to winning a Grammy

Virginia Noone '25

Alexander Lloyd Blake kept reminding his ensemble choir Tonicity (and mostly himself), that it was an honor to even be nominated for a Grammy. The group was nominated for Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album for their collaboration with Carla Patullo on her album “So She Howls.” The album is a tribute to Patullo’s fight against breast cancer. Blake was surprised to learn about the nomination but eager to attend the event to watch his other friends in the industry claim awards.

He remembered thinking the true victory was Patullo surviving cancer and being able to attend the Grammys, which happened to be on World Cancer Day, of all days. This is how Blake’s mind works. He notices patterns. Calculates his odds. Then predicts outcomes.

It wasn’t until five minutes before his category was announced that he allowed himself to believe in the possibility of taking home a Grammy. Members of Tonicity began to turn on their phones to record videos. “Just in case” they whispered to each other. Blake followed suit as his stomach began to wind itself into a knot.

“We can always just delete the video,” he thought.

Three decades ago, as a talented child, Blake started singing with the

all-adult choir of the First Baptist Missionary Church in Jacksonville, N.C. as they harmonized to gospel music. Music was his connection to religion as he began to organize himself around the idea of harmony as it related to both music and his personal life. He understood that, on a basic level, music is composed of different sounds and patterns that, when combined, produce a melody. A song is the outcome of each component existing on its own but serving as a small part of a greater whole.

He quickly figured out how to find harmony in music, but struggled to do so in his own life. As a closeted gay teenager in a conservative town, the feeling of not belonging followed him from childhood into adolescence as he continually found himself feeling like an outsider.

“I didn’t see a lot of positive examples of acceptance,” Blake said.

The summer before his senior year of high school, he was offered the opportunity to attend the North Carolina Governor’s School (“Gov School”) to study mathematics. He knew nothing about the prestigious residential summer program at the time. All he knew was this was his ticket out of Jacksonville. He was off to the “big city” — Winston-Salem, N.C.

His mother, Clova Blake, was thrilled for her son to be awarded this honor and knew how big of an

opportunity it was. Like her son, she is a deeply logical thinker.

When he was invited to audition for choral music at Gov School, he figured it would be a fun activity and decided to try it before dedicating the rest of his life to mathematics. Afterward, he would return to Winston-Salem to perform for his high school’s honor choir, falling in deeper love with music. On a whim, he took the AP Music Theory exam and scored a five without having ever taken the course.

“That was the first acknowledgment from my mom,” he says.

“We decided to try the whole music thing.”

Blake admits that he’s a homebody, so when his mom insisted that he attend college North Carolina, he happily obliged. The one school he ruled out was UNC-Chapel Hill since the majority of his graduating class enrolled there. He didn’t want a repeat of high school. He wanted to find a place where he felt like he fit in as himself.

Wake Forest University was enveloped in a thick fog the day he first visited. Blake describes the trees and the Upper Quad taking on almost magical properties as the low-hanging clouds blanketed the campus, protecting it from the rumblings of the outside world. It was on this day that he met Dr. Richard Hurd, who

has since passed away from cancer.

Dr. Hurd gave him his first choir lesson, where he shared both his expertise and love for music with Blake in a personal, compassionate way. Blake's mind was made up. He was going to apply early decision to Wake Forest. He had no idea how he was going to afford the school until he was granted multiple scholarships, including the Poteat Scholarship.

The math versus music dilemma was finally resolved after he spent two weeks in multivariable calculus at 8 a.m. Music was his calling.

He planned to audition for the capella group Chi Rho, after coincidentally staying with their director during a scholarship weekend before school began. But before he could audition, he was recruited to join the

cheerleading squad.

"I was told later that they just kept asking me because I was nice," he recalled. "I was told I could do both and joined the team and then Chi Rho changed their minds and

told me to choose between the two."

As a "recovering" people pleaser, Blake could not back out of his commitment to the cheerleaders and decided to remain on the team for two years. The cheerleaders were his guardian angels amidst the difficult social scene at Wake Forest. By his junior year, he switched back to Chi Rho and became the director of the group by his senior year.



Courtesy of Alexander Lloyd Blake

Despite both groups competing for Blake's participation, Wake Forest did not always feel the place of belonging that he had hoped for. Dr. Hurd's influence was a major factor in Blake's decision to attend Wake Forest, so much so that he hadn't considered the implications of attending a homogeneous PWI. He said he was one of the few Black males who were not student-athletes. Above that, feelings around homosexuality at the time were not entirely positive.

"I felt [this discrepancy] everywhere if I'm being honest," he said. "You add those two marginalizations together, and it made for a unique undergrad experience that was not particularly positive."

Once again finding himself on the outside of belonging, Blake found a refuge in music.

Blake majored in vocal performance with a concentration in arranging. Wake Forest's small class size allowed him the opportunity to conduct choirs weekly as an undergrad, which is a rare opportunity usually reserved for doctoral students at most universities. Dr. David Hagy

and Dr. Brian Gorelick mentored Blake and encouraged him in his work.

By his senior year, he had formed his own choir, the Wake Forest Chamber Singers and was writing and performing his original pieces for his final recital.

"There's nothing that beats the experience of being in front of people and having to make decisions on the spot," he said. "I got to have that experience a lot earlier at Wake Forest than a lot of my colleagues, and it's been a huge advantage in my career."

After graduating in 2010, Blake stayed at Wake Forest and worked for the admissions office for a year before working another year at the Governor's School. He continued to co-conduct the Chamber Singers, which other students had continued after he created the ensemble for his senior project.

As he began applying for master's programs, he joined the Winston-Salem Symphony Chorale where Robert Moody was conducting. He had been old classmates with Dr. Donald

Neuen, who was teaching a master's program at the University of California at Los Angeles. When he met Blake and learned he had never been west of Colorado, he encouraged him

to apply to UCLA. When Blake learned he had earned a full ride to the program, the decision was made.

He was off to Los Angeles.

In California, he was befriended and greeted once again by his guardian angels — cheerleaders.

He found himself immersed in the world of California, where people and things were allowed to be different. The cheerleading squad helped him navigate the new territory. Throughout the next seven years, he developed close connections with his colleagues in the music industry. He earned his master's from UCLA and then his doctorate from the University of Southern California. He watched as his newfound friends collaborated and competed in the industry all while relying on the support system they shared as a community.

"LA just seemed like it had limitless possibilities," he said. "I've learned that when doors open, you just need to walk through them."

This idea of limitless possibilities excited Blake's logic-based, mathematical mind. When he looks at a sheet of music he sees numbers.

He jokes how it baffles his friends in the industry when he tells them this. In conducting and writing music, he can control the formulas that go into creating a piece.

"There's a sense of security in formulas, math, languages and

music,” he says. “They’re all the same to me. They are systems that work and that different ideas can be applied to.”

Blake saw how people in power can manipulate and build systems that harm the most vulnerable groups in society.

After the 2016 election, Blake looked around his world outside of music and saw racism, sexism, homophobia and bigotry rising at alarming rates. They were symptoms of deeply broken systems that had been put in place in the country by people in power. They were systems that did not work.

Tonality was his response to these broken systems.

“Tonality’s first call was to create an environment where it wasn’t just the Western European-centered music that was celebrated and highlighted, but instead it was every genre that we covered, and therefore, every person reflected by those genres would also feel equally respected,” he said. “I think we realized with the diversity that had been created [in the group], or that had been intentionally sought after, that we could do more than just be diverse, but we could really start to speak to issues that were prevalent.”

And with that, the choir began to create and perform activism pieces. By 2019, the group had premiered its first album “Sing About It.”

Blake recognized that choral music allowed for his group to engage emotionally with divisive topics. Instead of throwing statistics or moral arguments at people just for them to become defensive, he found a way to inspire people

to change based on human connection rather than shame or guilt.

“We can talk about the statistics of mass shootings or guns in schools, but if a singer steps up and talks about their friend who died in a school shooting, which was happened in multiple of our concerts, I think it helps the audience understand this is not the issue of gun violence or of police



brutality,” he said. “They’re now hearing, witnessing and engaging emotionally with someone who’s telling your story about loss and grief. That transcends politics.”

He pressed record on his iPhone camera. Just in case.

Blake tried to hear what name the

announcer was saying but couldn’t quite make it out. He looked up as the screen flashed “Tonality” and his row erupted into screaming, so much so that the audience members next to them looked shocked and confused before realizing what had just happened.

Alexander Lloyd Blake and Tonality had just won a Grammy.

The group rushed onto the stage in a state of blurred bliss to accept the highest honor in the music industry. He looked out into the crowd of star-studded celebrities and into the camera that was broadcasting the moment for his family at home. He felt the younger versions of himself staring back at him as he held his first Grammy.

Waves of gratitude for his family, friends and mentors rushed over him. He felt grateful for every challenging moment he overcame, every community he belonged to, every door he had walked through and every door the award had just opened.

Performing his music is an act of radical love and acceptance of himself and others. To him, it’s a practice of harmony and activism. Music is his connection to God and humanity. It’s always been

his lifeline.

As he stood on stage, he pictured the child who grew up in Jacksonville wondering if he would ever find a place to belong.

“He was never not worthy,” Blake said with tears in his eyes. “There was always a place for him...he just didn’t realize.”

SALEM ASSASSINS

LEAVING A LEGACY ONE BEAT AT A TIME

COOPER SULLIVAN ('24)

Class has been dismissed for almost half an hour, but a handful of students are still sticking around. They stand at the front of the Carswell classroom blocking one of the doors as they pepper their professor with questions. He doesn't mind the barrage, he rather enjoys it as his students are eager to learn more about his expertise, but there's one thing Patrick Douthit's students don't seem to understand.

"Jay-Z is the best rapper alive," Douthit, better known as Grammy-award-winning producer 9th Wonder, says repeatedly.

The students keep listing names. "What about Kendrick? Cole? You gotta have Nipsey in your top-five." The answer never sways. They try, but it's hard to argue with someone like 9th Wonder, who is considered one of the best producers in the industry and has a mental catalog full of rhymes, samples and general hip-hop history.

The after-class conversations aren't always reminiscent of the school lunch table, but they are just as honest and entertaining. Whether it's a

continuation of the discussion from their "Black Cinema and Hip Hop Culture" course or a demonstration of production techniques, the conversations between the students and their professor are genuine.

The teaching isn't constrained by the lecture hall walls either. The other classroom is in the studio, where 9th Wonder teaches a small group of these students to become sharp samplers, rhythmic arrangers and complementary producers to mold sonic killers — Salem Assassins.

In October 2022, during 9th Wonder's first semester teaching at Wake Forest, the professor took his "History of Hip Hop" class on a field trip.

Instead of sitting through a two-and-a-half-hour-long lecture in Tribble Hall, the class walked over to Wait Chapel to see their professor speak with Dr. Corey D.B. Walker, director of the African-American Studies program, about jazz composer Charles Mingus. After the discussion, the Grammy-nominated Mingus Big Band would perform the legendary

bassist's work.

For some students in the class, that night transformed their entire relationship with music. But it wasn't just because of the music they heard.

On the walk back to Tribble, Cameron French ('23, '24) and Maurice Cowley ('23) had an idea.

The two friends had both been making beats since high school and started to take a more serious interest in producing music during college, especially when they enrolled in 9th Wonder's course. They were only a few steps away from one of the most respected ears in the industry; they weren't going to pass this opportunity up.

"F*** it, let's just show him these samples and beats we've been working on," French remembers saying. "Might as well, I mean, f*** it, what's he gonna say? He was about to get in his car because he always parked right in front of Tribble, so we were between him and his vehicle, and we were like 'Hey, uh, by the way.'"

Carrington Newsome ('23) quickly grabbed a speaker out of

ASSASSINS

Photos taken by Isabella Parolini
and Jacobi Gilbert



From left to right: Dimarvin Puerto, Jada Douhiti, El Awkward, Cameron French, Kobe Mccullough



DJ Johnson



Dimarvin Puerto

her car and connected it to French's phone. To their surprise, the Grammy-award-winning producer liked what he heard and invited French, Cowley, Newsome, Dimarvin Puerto ('24), Finn Siemion ('25) and DJ Johnson ('26) to join him at Black Smoke Studios in Winston-Salem to watch him chop samples of their choosing.

The day before the six of them were set to watch 9th Wonder produce, Johnson purchased a used drum pad machine for \$400. They were in the studio until after midnight. He didn't touch it at all.

"I kid you not, this is all we heard." French starts beating the table as if it were an imaginary drum pad machine. "That's it. Then he pressed a button, and it was a beat. I swear to God, you wouldn't know when he did none of the work. It was just a beat."

The whole process took five minutes. Six, tops, according to Newsome. They were mesmerized.

Each inspired, they got to work as soon as they got back, opening up Ableton and FL Studios, breaking in their MIDI keyboards and drum pad machines and scouring the internet for possible samples. They decided to form a group, calling themselves the Salem Assassins (Puerto's idea of 9th's Disciples was quickly shut down) and start collaborating. Puerto would be

the "solemn" sample finder; French, Cowley, Siemion and Johnson would be the producers and Newsome would be the singer-songwriter.

Over the next 18 months, three more people would become Salem Assassins: El Awkward ('25), a producer and on-campus DJ, Kobe McCullough ('24) — a rapper who jokes that he is only in the group because he has a car and Jada Douthit, 9th Wonder's daughter and a sophomore at Winston-Salem State University. Besides the differing sounds and inspirations, each person brings a sense of friendly competition and constructive criticism to the group.

"I love the fact that it's a producer group that we got," Cowley said. "Because if we were doing this by ourselves, you wouldn't necessarily have that checks and balances system. You know, Finn might send a beat in the chat, and it'll be crazy; or DJ might send a beat in the chat, it'll be crazy, CFrench, Kobe send a crazy rhyme, Carrington might put a crazy verse on it. I take a look at that and I'm like, 'Okay, I gotta come just as hard.'"

Looking back on that evening, 9th Wonder remembers liking what he heard from the novice producers, but it was their attitude toward the lost art of crate digging, or physically finding samples at a record shop and the appreciation for hip-hop culture that

really caught his ear.

"That's probably the biggest thing about them that I thought was dope was because they still wanted to explore this," 9th Wonder said. "You just don't find that often... Anyone can hand me a CD and say 'Check me out, am I good?' Or 'Check me out, do you like my music?' But if someone comes up to me and says 'I want to learn more about this,' I'm more in tune to deal with that than you just trying to be put on."

9th Wonder has most certainly returned the favor, inviting the Salem Assassins to his studio in Raleigh — Jamla Records at Bright Lady Studios — multiple times. They have connected with other Jamla Record (9th Wonder's label) artists, and have been featured on the Fass Auntie Lounge, a near-nightly DJ set by 9th Wonder that is live-streamed on Instagram.

"After that first studio session, I've noticed huge improvements in beat-making from CFrench, DJ the DJ, Finesse," Cowley said. "I think it's just neat to see the influence that these guys have, the OGs like Khrysis and 9th Wonder. I think these guys are really for the community. Because that's what hip-hop is all about. It's about giving back to the youth, pushing it forward, protecting our communities and protecting the culture, right? For 9th to just be around us while we're



making beats, I think that also brings out a side of creativity that you may not have unlocked.”

When it comes to the creation of hip-hop and the surrounding culture, many attribute the start to an August 1973 block party thrown by DJ Kool Herc in the Bronx, N.Y.

Using two turntables and a mixer, Herc spun records across genres — funk, soul, disco, whatever, as long as there was a percussion break — switching between the records to elongate the percussive breaks, allow more time for dancing and rhyme over the beat. The DJ technique was noticed across the Bronx and eventually spread across the five boroughs.

The Sugarhill Gang popularized the use of rapping on their 1979 song “Rapper’s Delight” by introducing a simplistic rhythmic flow and A-A-B-B rhyme scheme. This style was used by other groups such as Run-D.M.C. and Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, creating an era now referred to as “old school hip hop.”

As the ’80s brought about newer and more accessible technology, like the Roland TR-808 drum machine or Akai MPC sampler, production began to include original drum patterns and more complex sample combinations. The beats weren’t the only part of hip-hop evolving. In the late ’80s,

rap started its shift from fun, positive, celebratory rhymes to a more aggressive and hard-edged sound, reflecting the socioeconomic realities some artists faced. Lyrics became more metaphorical and rhyme schemes more intricate.

It was around this time that 9th Wonder, still Patrick, was introduced to hip-hop in Winston-Salem, N.C. Growing up, Douthit’s parents listened mostly to gospel music, and Douthit’s uncle listened to R&B and soul. As a middle schooler, he would go to his friend Randy Kilgore’s house off Reynolds Park Road and listen to Eric B. and Rakim in the basement.

While in the eighth grade at Hill Middle School, Douthit was recruited by Dr. Ernest Wade, Wake Forest’s Office of Minority Affairs director, to join a newly created college preparatory program called Project Ensure. The premise was to encourage talented Black high school students from the Winston-Salem area with their secondary schooling by introducing the students to the college environment during the summer months.

In 1991, Douthit was a rising junior at Glenn High School, and could already play half a dozen instruments. For this summer of Project Ensure, Douthit was paired with another Winston-Salem native as his mentor — Dr. Nate French (’93). Today, French is the executive director of First

in the Forest, director of the Magnolia Scholars program, associate professor of communication at Wake Forest and the father of Cameron French.

Nate French recalled his role being similar to that of a camp counselor rather than a college prep mentor. He joined the students for meals, acting as the RA and helping with the daily group activity, but he still believes the program created a positive impact on the students.

After the summer program was over, Douthit and Nate French would hear updates about each other through mutual friends, but eventually grew apart as they entered different stages of life. Over two decades later, the mentor-mentee pairing would reconnect, again on the Reynolda campus.

“I’m sitting in my office and I get an email that’s asking me if I’ll come to his speech that night. It’s just signed ‘9th Wonder’ and I’m like...” French gives a confused look as he tries to figure out who sent him this message. “This was before [he taught at Wake Forest], and I remember going to that speech. What was amazing was I walked into that speech and I saw Ron and Rita Kilgore — my best friend was Ronald Kilgore — so I saw his parents there. I’m asking why they’re on campus and they say ‘Remember Patrick?’ And I’m like, that’s who he is!”

9th Wonder had come to give a speech in Carswell's Annenberg Auditorium about his career, both as a musician and as a college professor. After achieving success as a part of Little Brother and working with Jay-Z, Destiny's Child and Mary J. Blige (the latter collaboration earned the producer a Grammy on the 2005 record "The Breakthrough"), 9th Wonder returned to North Carolina Central University as an artist in residence to teach the history of hip hop and music production courses. He would eventually join the faculty at Duke University (his favorite college basketball team), Harvard University and Long Island University before coming back to Wake Forest.

Nate French believes his hands-on and engaging teaching of hip hop is something that not just the Salem Assassins can appreciate, but all of 9th Wonder's students.

"What I see in his lectures is a desire to make sure that students understand that hip hop didn't start today, that the music didn't start today... He brings that together and kind of ties it together in a space of community and a space of learning."

A professional music career, let alone mainstream success, is never a given. The hours upon hours (upon hours and even more hours) that must be put into the craft make it so that success, no matter how large or small, can't be accidental. At some point in every artist's career, there comes a time when a decision about what they want to accomplish with their art must be made. What do they want to gain from this opportunity? Is it purely a hobby and creative outlet? Or are there messages and feelings they want — need to share?

"I just want to make sure we execute," Newsome said. "Do everything we can at the time, with

the stuff we have. We can't let this opportunity — all of us together, our connections here, the blessing we have to be able to go to Jamla [Records] — we can't just let that slide between our fingertips."

When the 2024-25 academic year begins, only four of the nine members will still be on campus. Two members of the group have already started their careers — Cowley lives in Detroit working as a performance engineer for General Motors and Newsome is getting ready to begin dental school at Southern Illinois University — while three more members — Cameron French, McCullough and Puerto — are set to graduate from Wake Forest this coming May.

Of course, graduation does not mark the end of their musical pursuits, individually or with those back in Winston-Salem. Both Cowley and Newsome still spend their free time crate digging, chopping samples and writing lyrics, and both are still active in the Salem Assassins group chat. McCullough knows that he will

continue writing his "playa poetry" post-graduation and Cameron French is always going to keep music a part of his life, whether it's playing the drums in front of others or pressing the drum pad in his room.

"It's just one of those things," Cowley said over the phone. "If you really got passion for it, and if it's really something that you want to do, you'll make time for it."

Siemion, a junior minoring in music, has tried to make producing a part of his daily routine even as he is currently studying abroad in London.

Only a sophomore, Johnson understands the struggle that Cowley,

Newsome and the other soon-to-be graduates face. Johnson plays offensive line for the



Patrick "9th Wonder" Douthit

Wake Forest football team and gigs as a DJ at on and off-campus parties and events.

“I’ve always had to choose my whole, entire life between going to do football and going to do music,” Johnson said. “It’s always been like, ‘Oh, I gotta get time here, get time there.’ But, I’ve come to the point where I’m done choosing. I’m gonna do both. Whatever God has in store for me, wherever life is going to take me, that’s what’s gonna be.”

Johnson’s confidence that it will all work out is a shared feeling amongst the group. As McCullough, a psychology major, points out, none of the Salem Assassins are trying to “make it out” with music. Puerto plans to attend law school. Siemion would like to work behind the scenes in the industry. Jada Douthit wants to be a sports analyst. It’s the fact that they are all making music together for the love of making music that makes being in the group so fun.

As a group, the Salem Assassins have already decided what they are going to do with this opportunity. Besides recording and releasing a multi-track record, which is in production, there’s one other project that every-
one has in
mind

— leaving a legacy. More specifically, creating a space for other Black Wake Forest students to be as creative and expressive as they want.

“That’s the goal for me,” Puerto said. “Being able to support these amazing minds. I can be someone from the outside as long as I’m in the space, but if they could do what they could do, and I can help with that, then why not?”

Jada Douthit has been able to lay the groundwork for something similar at Winston-Salem State after noticing a lack of music clubs on campus outside of the marching band, Red Sea of Sound. Earlier in the spring semester, she and her friend, Taimullah Moore, founded the Watchers Soundwave Hip-Hop Club.

“I wanted to create an environment where people can really enjoy music, especially hip-hop because that’s what I know most about,” Jada Douthit said. “I’m hoping this idea spreads to other HBCUs because it’s all Black people — we created hip-hop. So why wouldn’t we have a space that we created on campus?”

9th Wonder can see the good intentions immediately and believes that all of the Salem Assassins are on a path to accomplishing their collective goals.

“‘Take advantage’ is a loose term; some people see me and see what they can get out of me, not what they can learn from me. It’s two different things. For them, they want to not only learn something from me but leave something and pay it forward for somebody else. There may be a situation where down the road, somebody’s gonna look at them — or somebody might look at them now — and say ‘You had a class with that dude? You serious?’”

9th Wonder does not believe that people get

to decide their legacy and how they are remembered. That burden lies in the hands of everyone else. Whenever he drives past the corner of Sixth and Liberty Streets, he sees a two-story mural of himself, a proud homage to one of Winston-Salem’s finest sons. Seeing it is still a surreal experience.

“When they put it up [in the summer of 2023], they asked me, ‘Did I want a ceremony? Did I want the city to be here?’ Nope. I didn’t want any of that, you know what I mean? I didn’t want none of that. Some people want that attention, man, I don’t. I don’t, because I never expected to get it.”

The mural is courtesy of the North Carolina Musician Murals Trail, a project created by artist Scott Nurkin to paint notable Tar Heel musicians in their hometown. It’s a mixture of commemoration and education, where sonic trailblazers like John Coltrane (Hamlet, N.C.), Nina Simone (Tryon, N.C.) and Thelonious Monk (Rocky Mount, N.C.) are appropriately honored with larger-than-life depictions. So when the Chapel Hill-based artist started considering a mural in Winston-Salem, there was no question about who would be painted next.

“The man is prolific and that’s inspiring to me,” Nurkin said. “I don’t do a lot of musicians that are as prolific as 9th.”

While 9th and I speak at the mural, a fan in his 20s recognizes 9th Wonder from across the street. The fan walks over to introduce himself, the two snap a photo. Even after 20 years in the game, 9th Wonder admits he still isn’t used to those kinds of interactions.

As the fan walks away, Patrick Douthit looks across the street at his daughter Jada. She smiles from ear to ear as she stands in front of her father’s mural. He smiles just as wide. That’s the legacy he cares about more.



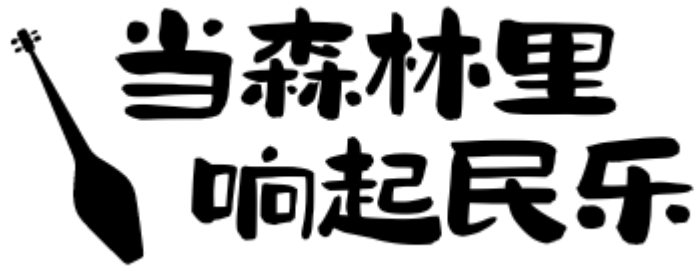
Jada Douthit

Yiyi "Luna" Bai teaching
Chinese dance to children
(Photo taken by
Sophie Fionda)

**FAR AWAY
FROM HOME,
THESE CHINESE
STUDENTS ARE
REDISCOVERING
THEIR CULTURAL
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THROUGH THE
FAMILIAR TUNES
PLAYED ON
TRADITIONAL
CHINESE
INSTRUMENTS**

Sheryl Zhang ('25)
also contributed to the
reporting of this story

A Little Chinatown of Music



It's 1973 in Harbin, China. Meimei Wan stood beside her music teacher's harmonium, feeling the ebbs and flows of the wind sent by foot-operated bellows. Something stirred in the 8-year-old girl's heart, urging her to sing along with the lyrics and dance her fingers on the keys.

Fifty years later, Wan is taking her first Chinese instrument lessons in the United States taught by Wake Forest students in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Before this, she had been learning alone, trying to recall scores from her distant musical training memory.

Now in class, she is getting the hang of playing the notes that give voice to her cherished lyrics, surrounded by fellow Chinese music enthusiasts who hail from different regions of China and span generations.

The Teachers

Wake Forest students Hongqing "Ives" Xue, Jing Chen and Yiyi "Luna" Bai arrive at Speas Global Elementary School, which houses the Sunday Class of Wen Hua Chinese School, with their guzheng and several bamboo flutes in tow. The late February afternoon sun

casts a warm glow into the school hallways as they rush to their classroom. The three whisper in Mandarin, "We mustn't be late for our students!"

Their students, Winston-Salem residents who have lived here for more than a decade, are waiting in the classroom with their guzhengs — a traditional Chinese zither played by plucking the strings, much like playing the piano keys — sitting on the floor in front of them. Their faces light up as they welcome their teachers.

"We're thankful for the Wake Forest students who invest their time in teaching us," Wan said.

In the guzheng and flute class, Xue and Chen taught popular tunes such as the theme song from the Chinese fantasy adventure anime movie "Big Fish & Begonia", while Bai focused on teaching Chinese dance to approximately 10 children. In early February, both groups are getting ready for their annual performance at the Chinese New Year Gala for members of Wen Hua Chinese School, and everyone is putting their heart into it.

Chen's guzheng class has five students: four elderly Chinese women and one Chinese-American girl, whose

mother helps out as a translator and supervisor. Before starting the rehearsal, Chen stops by each guzheng, adjusting the strings with a tuner and tweaking the nails for a uniform tone.

In class, Chen wears active clothes, with clean-cut ponytails peeking out from her baseball cap. She speaks in a quick, expressive tone, eager to instill more skills into her students.

With an iPad displaying the score and a pair of scissors as a metronome, Chen initiates the rehearsal by tapping on the desk. The group starts plucking the strings, creating individual notes that blend into a flowing melody.

The musicians fixed their eyes on their instruments, gently pulling the strings and exploring the diverse sounds produced by each of the 21 strings. Occasionally, a wrong note would be struck, causing a minor hiccup, but the group brushes it off with laughter.

"My students aren't looking for mastery of the instrument," Chen said. "They just want to play folk music together out of their passion."

Indeed, anyone familiar with the guzheng would recognize the group as a rookie class. Yet the serene expression on each student's face makes it seem like

Hope Zhu ('25)

they are training professionals.

Halfway through the class, Xue leads his three flute students into the classroom for a joint rehearsal. Chen gracefully sweeps the strings, setting a melancholic tone with scales. The high-pitched flute, led by Xue and echoed by his students, swiftly chimes in, complemented by the deep tones of the guzheng.

Far away from home, these Chinese students were rediscovering their cultural heritage through the familiar tunes played on traditional Chinese instruments, while connecting with members of the ethnic diaspora who yearn for the nostalgic lyrics of their roots.

On the evening of Feb. 25, the group took the stage in the Speas Elementary auditorium. Women wore red mandarin gowns known as Qipao, while men donned black suits. The audience, mostly of Chinese heritage, filled the seats and showered them with rounds of applause and cheers after the last note struck.

“We have a sizable Chinese community here,” Xue said. “Offering kids an opportunity to explore Chinese culture would be really valuable.”

Assembling the Ensemble

Xue and Chen are part of the Wake Forest University Chinese Ensemble, a musical group formed in 2016 by Gui Li ('20), a Chinese international student at Wake Forest who brought her guzheng all the way overseas, sensing the lack of Chinese music representation on campus.

During her high school years in Michigan, Li spent four years playing the pipa — a pear-shaped wooden instrument also known as the “Chinese lute.” Every year at her high school’s talent show, she stood alone in the “non-western instrument” category and took home the win each time without any competition.

“When I arrived at Wake Forest, I had a desire to do something similar,” Li explained.

Inspired by her father, a magazine editor with a passion for ancient Chinese

culture, Li was driven by the mission of “sharing the beauty of Chinese cultural heritage in America.”

In her first year, she met other Chinese students who played erhu and guzheng.

“It was like a casual chat that led to the discovery that we all had these instruments,” Li recalled. “That’s when we began the journey of forming an ensemble.”

Ziyi Geng, Assistant Teaching Professor at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures who currently serves as an advisor to the ensemble, recognized the ensemble as the sole ambassador of Chinese folk music not only within the university but also across Winston-Salem, High Point and Greensboro.

“The ensemble’s growth is truly impressive,” Geng said. “The students’ initiative led to their recognition by the university.”

The ensemble typically rehearses once or twice a week to prepare for their end-of-semester performance. These rehearsals often include a mix of contemporary songs and timeless classics beloved by Chinese folk music enthusiasts. This semester, they’re joining forces with the Chinese Dance Club for a rendition of the song “The History”. They’ll mix the vibrant sounds of guzheng, the sharp notes of dizi (Chinese flute) and the rhythmic thuds of tanggu (Chinese drum) with the melodious strains of a cello, portraying historical transitions.

The ensemble members are recruited by

signing up for a one-credit class, MSC 151. At its peak in 2019, the ensemble comprised 16 students playing instruments like guzheng, pipa, erhu, dizi and tanggu, among others. In the fall of 2021, the ensemble also featured a creative combination of Western instruments like guitar and piano.

“If we want Westerners to appreciate Chinese music, blending styles is inevitable,” Chen said. “Similar to Chinese cuisine — authentic dishes are rare here. To reach a broader audience, it needs a transformation, like General Tso’s chicken.”

“General Tso’s chicken” is an Americanized Chinese food that is often scoffed by Chinese students. To com-



Jing Chen
(Photo taken by
Ryan Souza)

pare something to General Tso's chicken is to say that it is Westernized. Yet, Chen's compromising ideal is grounded in reality. Despite the ensemble being a sizable group, the average Chinese orchestra typically consists of 20 to 100 members, but the university only enrolls 200 to 300 Chinese students annually, making it a challenging feat to maintain the ensemble's vitality.

Facing Dissonance

In 2019, the ensemble faced a significant setback when many seniors graduated and the group struggled to recruit. The group managed to arrange concerts, albeit with modest attendance. The year 2020 saw the ensemble grind to a halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many incoming students were stuck in their home countries, resulting in a mix of mostly American students with Yujia "Alice" Cai and a few other Chinese students in the ensemble.

"It felt different, not quite like our usual Chinese ensemble," Cai said.

Their typical flexibility in adjusting pieces based on the moment and instrument availability had to be set aside for adhering to the score to ensure unity among American and Chinese members. The result was beyond Cai's expectations: they posted several pieces online for a unique pandemic-era remote concert.

With the waning of COVID-19 and the arrival of Wake Forest's class of 2024 and 2025, the ensemble swiftly recovered.

Geng saw no decline in members' enthusiasm as she assumed mentorship from Dr. Xijinyan Chen, Assistant Teaching Professor at Wake Forest Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, who is on leave this semester.

"As soon as the members returned to campus, the ensemble was revived, and it has since grown larger with the addition of new incoming students," Geng said.

In November 2021, the ensemble held its first live concert after COVID-19 with the Wake Forest Uni-

versity Gamelan Giri Murti, showcasing traditional tunes like "Butterfly Lovers" and "Music of the Heavenly Palace," along with popular covers like "Carrying You" from the anime "Castle in the Sky" and "Sun Quan the Emperor," a hit on China's social media in 2015.

But Chen noticed a gap amidst the vibrant cultural scene. While people showed interest in indigenous music, it wasn't enough to keep them engaged throughout performances, resulting in a modest audience turnout.

"After the Gamelan Giri Murti performance, nearly half of the audience stood up and left," Chen said. "I felt quite awkward onstage."

Xue echoed the sentiment, but he

"For dizi, it will be really hard to work with another Western instrument as they just cannot play certain songs"

- Hongqing "Ives" Xue

also said that certain music forms might be too traditional for Western audiences to understand without integration.

"For dizi, it will be really hard to work with another Western instrument as they just cannot play certain songs," Xue said.

Despite challenges, culture can transcend borders. Geng recalled performing traditional Chinese songs like "Colorful Clouds Chasing the Moon" at Brookberry Farm senior living community, predominantly attended by elderly white individuals.

Geng chuckled as she recalled that afternoon.

"They sat so quietly, those gray-

haired grandpas, completely absorbed. After our performance, they had numerous questions: What's the name of that instrument? How long have you been studying it? How does it create such beautiful sounds? Their genuine curiosity showed, and our ensemble members feel a great sense of pride in their achievements."

The Finale

In the future, Geng mentioned her desire to introduce more experiential activities and initiatives to campus through the Chinese ensemble. She aims to raise awareness of Chinese music and art culture among American and international students.

She also wants to grow Wen Hua's network.

"Every child, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to experience playing these instruments," she said.

The semester's finale for the Chinese ensemble unfolded on April 9 at Brendle Recital Hall, drawing a small audience mainly composed of Chinese international students. They hummed along as Chen skillfully played the melody of "Blue and White Porcelain" on the guzheng, much like the exquisite craftsmanship of the porcelain it's named after. For many of them, this song is a shared memory from their childhood. They held their breath as Bai's faintly teal long sleeve fluttered in the air, resembling a butterfly dancing in that timeless moment. Meanwhile, Dagu's firm beats resonated, accompanied by guzheng's simulation of a time-worn clock in "The History" piece.

Bai sees the purpose of the World Music Ensemble on campus in a straightforward way. As a freshman interested in culture preservation, she sees music as an inseparable part of intangible culture, carried through the movement of people worldwide.

"We all come from distant places far apart from one another, yet we are here today because of what we love," said Bai.



Notes of Home:



Ella Klein (Photo taken
by Sidney White)



Navigating Nostalgia and Identity in Winston-Salem

I don't remember going to my first concert. By the time I was 9 years old, I'd gone to countless house shows and music venues. I saw the Smashing Pumpkins live and grew a lasting affinity for the White Stripes.

Growing up, music encompassed me. It became my childhood security blanket.

My mom met my stepdad Eddie because they were both entrenched in the Winston-Salem music scene. Eddie was in the locally famous garage-rock band Jews and Catholics, in which my mom's best friend, Aunt Alanna (the Jew), played the upright bass, while Eddie (the begrudged Catholic), played the guitar. Having moved here from New York, my mom was the ultimate cool girl and made sure her associates were up to snuff as well. All of my parents' friends either played music or owned a bar/venue, usually both.

When I was little, common names like Ziggy's and The Garage, or underground haunts like the Black Lodge were all parts of my vocabulary. I saw They Might Be Giants at Ziggy's in the fifth grade. I ordered Sprites at The Garage while watching my stepdad, dubbed "Shreddie" by his friends, tear up the stage. While he would flip through records at Earshot, my mom would shop in Marshall's, and I would stare at the David Bowie statue while sitting on the ratty green couch. As block fests like Summer on Trade played, I'd eat the shoestring fries from Skippy's while watching my parents wade through a crowd of people — who they

all knew. I loved running around Krankies, now a hipster eatery and coffee shop, which used to host the coolest gigs and art markets.

Places like Ziggy's and The Garage became like childhood friends to me. Eventually, these places closed. Ziggy's first, then The Garage. Earshot was replaced with Hippo Records after the beloved owner, Phred, died after a battle with leukemia. Jews and Catholics disbanded in 2015, leaving me and the garage rockers of Winston-Salem heartbroken.

By the time I got to high school, a lot of the cool venues around town were gone. Now, you had to drive to Charlotte or Raleigh to see big names, and Cat's Cradle in Chapel Hill to see the indie-rockers. My parents and their Cobain-worshiping friends still hung around at smaller venues like Monstercade, and in 2018, The Ramkat took over what used to be Ziggy's. Still, compared to when I was 9, my local concert attendance had drastically changed.

When I was 15, I realized I did not grow up in the same Winston-Salem that many of my friends did. Sometimes, I would lament not having cookie-cutter parents and secretly stew in jealousy of the families I saw on TV. My way of rebelling from my parents was not attending art school or being in a band in high school. Instead, I had a phase of straightening my hair and wanting to be a lawyer. Now, in my early adulthood, I couldn't be more grateful for my semi-unconventional upbringing.

When I started to go around town

with my friends in high school, they would always joke that I would run into two people I knew per minute. Strangers often came up to me, gushing about how they knew me when I was "this tall" or asked me how my parents were. Besides being a local musician, my stepdad worked at a local radio station, and my mom had stints writing for the local paper, helping run a large art school and teaching at local universities. They were the epitome of hip young parents. Perhaps over-involved in the 30-to-40-something former-grunge-listening-garage-rockers scene, they wouldn't even let me watch Disney Channel or listen to any music they didn't think was objectively good.

For my high school graduation party, I begged my stepdad to reunite Jews and Catholics for the first time since 2015. I had only given him and my aunt a month's notice, and with heavy hearts, they said they couldn't do it. However, when I was working as a server after school, they would secretly sneak the upright bass and stacked pedal board into our garage and practice. For my party, they surprised me with a reunion show and left me (and everyone else) in tears.

I stayed in Winston-Salem for college after a lot of Ladybird-esque rampages yelling about how I needed to leave my hometown and branch out in my collegiate life. Life as a Wake Forest student differs drastically from that of a "townie," which I have been called several times. In Wake Forest circles, I always feel like

a local or the Winston-Salem representative, and in my Winston circles, I am a Wake Forest student. It feels like an evil tug-of-war, where I feel like an outsider, no matter where I am.

When I started hanging out with the Wake Radio disciples and artsy folks on campus, a common complaint I heard was that the art scene in Winston-Salem sucks. For being the “City of Arts and Innovation,” the scene seems lackluster compared to the flashier nearby cities like Durham or Asheville. While I get to complain about Winston-Salem any day of the week, the second I hear a negative word come out of someone else’s mouth, I rise to defend it. I take every knock of the city to heart — and often rise at the chance to throw some punches at my college, just to prove I haven’t been fully converted, yet.

To me, Winston-Salem will never be Deactown. It’ll be going to house parties that my parents’ friends threw in Ardmere, skipping class in high school to get Café Gelato and sitting in the art park on Trade Street, reading a book from the Little Free Library.

When I tramp around town now, dragging my out-of-town college friends around Winston-Salem, I’m the most depressing tour guide in the world. A lot of my highlights are spaces that are now unrecognizable, and I share a sob story of how they closed forever. I clutch the places of my childhood close to my chest. I’ve never been good at letting things go. Winston-Salem grows more gentrified by

the minute, and I leap at the chance to tell anyone what we once had. In a way, it’s hard to watch my peers now talk about my old haunts. I feel a sense of ownership over my town and fight the urge to gatekeep the spaces that I want to preserve for locals.

But I also jump at the chance to bring them to my stepdad’s shows or proudly tout my status as the resident nepo-baby of the local music industry. I’ll never skip a chance to bring

“I still long for what Winston-Salem used to be, but my rose-colored glasses will stay strapped to my head for our little city.”

someone to the Airstream, hit up McKay’s and then go catch a show at Gas Hill.

Perhaps I do agree that the art scene in Winston-Salem is dismal. I miss the venues of my childhood, big names coming into town and large block parties filling summer downtown streets. I romanticize my childhood and mourn the scene that my parents had. In the same vein, The Ramkat has been ramping up artists. New venues like The Den are emerging, and small local bands are popping up all over the place. Art Crush prevails with the simple

pleasure of shutting down a block and filling it with good, loud music.

In 2023, Eddie and Aunt Alanna reunited to play Fem Fest, a festival that stems from the organization FemFestNC, a non-profit that supports women through art and music, donating their funding to Family Services. Their main mission is to advocate and fundraise to end sexual violence and domestic abuse, aiding women all over Forsyth County. Bryn, the founder, was a friend of my stepdad and passed away in 2021. Her legacy is an important one to be honored. FemFest was one of the most special nights of my life, and I was ecstatic that Jews and Catholics took the big stage at The Ramkat, playing for a public audience for the first time in eight years. My mom and I danced at the front the whole time, surrounded by the friends, musicians and the artists who raised me.

I’ve accepted my kooky, pretentious family and realized I turned out exactly like my parents. Now rid of my teenage shame, I’ve jammed with more musicians at Wake Forest than I ever did at my arts magnet high school. I still long for what Winston-Salem used to be, but my rose-colored glasses will stay strapped to my head for our little city.

I would never blame my parents or their army of band-tee-shirt-clad friends for the “downfall” of the Winston-Salem indie culture. It’s not the responsibility of the generation who created the art-filled spaces of my youth to uphold the music scene.

It’s our turn.



my first concert X's



Jews + Catholic's graduation Party reunion ♡



my mom

my stepdad



2011!



me!



10th birthday flying V

SONGS OF WINSTON-SALEM CHRISTA DUTTON ('24)



TOP
Gigging Floundermen at
Ziggy's (from left to right
John French, Chuck Dale
Smith, Ed Bumgardner, Sam
Moss, Mitch Easter) (Courte-
sy of Ed Bumgardner)

RIGHT
Sacred Irony (Courtesy of
Chuck Smith)



TOP
The 5 Royales (Courtesy
of Karen Scales)

At midnight on Jan. 15, 1812, in Salem, North Carolina, the sky is dark and the temperatures are dropping. A snowstorm had swept through town just a few days before. In the stillness, hymns pierce through the midnight quiet.

Johannes Herbst lays sick in his bed with pectoral dropsy. His Moravian brothers and sisters gather around his deathbed to sing as his soul departed earth. Three days later, Herbst was buried in God's Acre, the Moravian cemetery in Old Salem that is still there today.

Music was, and still is, central to Moravian life. The church believed that music held the power to transform even the most mundane of tasks into an act of worship. Music made things sacred. The founders of the Moravian church believed that "all of life should be a liturgy." Even death.

The city of Winston-Salem has an artistic DNA. The country's first local arts council was established here in 1949. The city is home to UNC School of the Arts, a prestigious pub-

lic arts school. Legendary artists and bands began their careers here and influenced music far outside of Winston-Salem. Hang around the galleries and coffee houses long enough, and you'll notice that many locals have an eye for beauty and the hands to craft it. Those roots can be traced back to the city's early settlers — the Moravian communities of Bethabara, Bethania and Salem, who lived their lives as liturgies.

"As you go back to the earliest history of the first settlers of this area of the country, they were proponents of art and created art and music. This town has followed in those footsteps ever since," said Richard Emmett, owner of the music venue The Ramkat who has worked at Winston-Salem arts nonprofits.

As the city grew in size, population and infrastructure, the music changed with it. Each decade brought a new sound. Any attempt at capturing Winston-Salem music in a singular story would fall short. It's too vast. There are bound to be omissions. Nonetheless, there are stories worth telling. If the city's

churches, streets, drink houses, high schools, clubs and concert venues could talk, they'd tell story after story of the city's rich musical culture that's been alive since the 18th century.

It is Salem's great fortune that Herbst moved from Bethlehem, P.A. — the other epicenter of Moravian life in the United States — to serve as a bishop in the Salem church just months before he died. Because he is buried here, historic Old Salem is home to Herbst's extensive music collection that he brought with him when he moved.

The collection includes about a thousand anthems that he copied by hand. These songs are works of art to behold with both the ear and the eye. After spending his days working in the church, he transcribed Moravian music by candlelight at night. His copy is clean and crisp with few mistakes or scratch-outs.

The Moravians preserved Herbst's copies, along with thousands of other records from their early days. Each town had a diarist who wrote an en-

The Allisons (Courtesy of Ed Bumgardner)



try every few days, noting facets of community life such as who moved to town, who led the day's litany and even what the weather was like. They preserved documents, maps and instruments. Through these archives and stories passed through posterity, we know how music defined Moravian life.

Moravians held daily services where they'd sing hymns. Music also accompanied events like weddings, funerals and the arrivals and departures of congregants. To the surprise of some, Moravians also performed music to entertain, playing compositions by more avant-garde artists of the time like Mozart and Beethoven.

"For them, music was not just something they did in church," Christopher Ogburn, director of programming and resident musicologist at the Moravian Music Foundation, said. "It was something that existed in all aspects of their life."

In 1913, the municipalities of Winston and the Moravian Salem merged to form Winston-Salem. By that point, tobacco was fueling the Winston-Salem and Forsyth County economy. Downtown began to attract farmers to sell their tobacco

crops. The markets also attracted bluesmen from all over the South, who saw an opportunity to put a hat on the ground and strum their guitar. They had the music, and the farmers had the money.

Preston Fulp, born in 1915, often played the tobacco auctions in Winston-Salem beginning in the late '20s going into the '40s. While he'd make a meager \$5 for a week's worth of work at the sawmill, he'd come home with \$100 after a weekend at the auctions.

"What made Preston distinctive was that he was equally skilled at playing music from the Black blues tradition and the white country-music tradition," writes the Music Maker Foundation in the nonprofit's profile of Fulp.

At that time, the dance halls were segregated. In one dance hall in Mount Airy, Fulp would move from one side of the room to the other, playing blues for the Black folks and country music for the white crowd.

Ernest Thompson from Clemmons is recognized as one of the first "hillbilly" artists — referring to white southern string band musicians — to record music in 1924. Three years later, Okeh Records sent

a team down south to Winston-Salem to find musicians not heard in big cities like New York or Chicago. They recorded the hillbilly group North Carolina Cooper Boys at the old West End School, which was one of the earliest sessions outside the music hub of New York City.

Out of this period, came a whole host of talented Piedmont blues and American roots artists who were either born in Winston-Salem or lived here for a stint: Haskell "Whistlin' Britches" Thompson, Macavine Hayes, Captain Luke, Willa Mae Buckner and Guitar Gabriel. Many of these artists and their work were shortly forgotten after their careers waned.

Many consider this style of music to be the roots of American music. Tim Duffy, a visual artist and musician living in Carrboro, is committed to tending it.

In 1990, Duffy was a graduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill working for the Southern Folklife Collection documenting a bluesman named James "Guitar Slim" Stephens. When Stephens was dying of cancer, he told Duffy that if he truly wanted to understand the blues, he



Chuck Smith



Photos taken by Maryam Khanum



Ed Bumgardner

“No one really believed these guys were any good. I knew they were great.”

needed to find a man named Guitar Gabriel, who was now in his late 60s. So his search began.

Duffy was living in Winston-Salem at the time, and he kept asking around about the elusive Guitar Gabriel, to no avail. One day Duffy got lucky. He was substitute teaching at Kimberley Park Elementary and asked his students if they knew him.

“He’s my neighbor,” one kid said.

The student gave him directions, and Duffy found Gabe’s son Hawkeye, who took him to his apartment. Gabe came out the door, hugged Duffy and said, “I know where you want to go. I’ve been there before. I can take you there.”

Gabe became Duffy’s guide to Winston-Salem drink house culture. Drink houses are residential homes that illegally sell alcohol by the drink, common in Southern Black neighborhoods.

“These are long-standing places — they’re like community centers,” Duffy said. “The bigger ones are running 24/7. They sell liquor and dollar shots.”

Gabe and Duffy started making music together, playing at different drink houses and clubs across Winston-Salem. Being immersed in this scene of older blues players, he realized the poverty these musicians



were battling.

“The record industry really didn’t work for these guys,” Duffy said. “No one really believed that these guys were any good. I knew they were great. It was hard to get any recognition for them.”

The idea for the Music Maker Foundation was born in Winston-Salem in 1994. The nonprofit is committed to excavating the “best music you’ve never heard.” They focus on certain music traditions from the South: blues, gospel, string band, folk, Native American and singer-songwriter. And they financially support a certain type of artist: musicians over 55 years old who

live on less than \$25,000 a year. The foundation helps artists find recording opportunities and book performances as well as receive medical care and access to affordable housing.

While not a part of the Music Maker’s band of artists, The 5 Royales are another group of musicians from Winston-Salem who waited far too long to get their due.

Lowman Pauling was working in the kitchen at a Wake Forest University dining hall in the late ’80s, and he showed a co-worker his 45 record of The 5 Royales’ “Dedicated to the One I Love.”

“Man, my dad loves that song,” his co-worker said.

“My dad wrote that song,” Pauling said.

“Naw, I don’t wanna hear that.” He didn’t believe him.

“I’ll bet you \$20,” Pauling said. He pulled out the record and pointed to his father’s name on the cover. “What does that say?”

“Lowman Pauling,” the man said. “What’s my name?”

Pauling left \$20 richer.

It was at this moment that Pauling realized that when someone doesn’t believe you when you tell them who your parents are, your parents are probably a big deal.



Eugene Tanner



Karen Scales

Pauling’s father, also named Lowman, was the lead singer and songwriter of the R&B group The 5 Royales. Other members included Otto Jeffries, Johnny Tanner, Obadiah Carter and Jimmy Moore. Jeffries eventually left the group and was replaced by Eugene Tanner, Johnny’s brother.

The 5 Royales began as a gospel group called the Royal Sons Quintet in 1951. They played gospel concerts at churches all over east Winston-Salem.

They didn’t sacrifice their gospel roots when they transitioned into a fully R&B group. What made them unique was that they combined the gospel sound with R&B lyrics.

“They were not unlike any other group with a church background,” Fred Tanner, the brother of group members Eugene and Johnny said. “But when they left to go to R&B they knew nothing other than that style of singing. That was what made them unique.”

This style paved the way for artists like Ray Charles, James Brown, Aretha Franklin and Steve Cropper. Those artists gained more recognition for their careers than The 5 Royales.

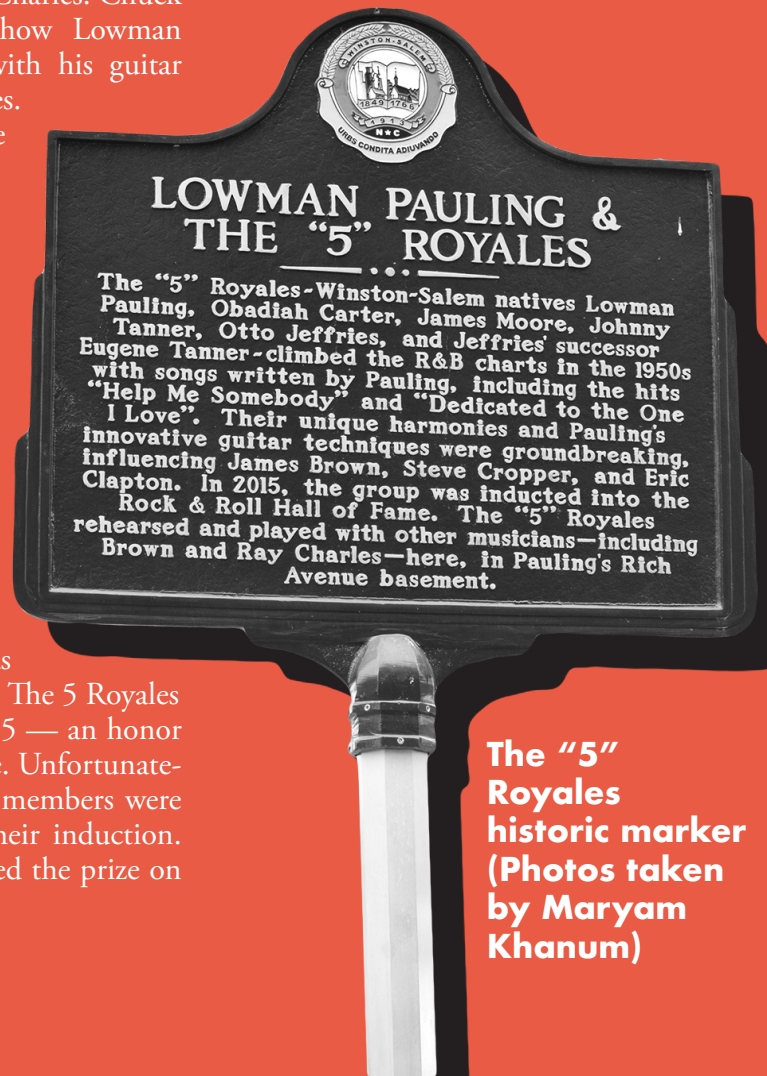
Some of the group’s greatest hits were even made more popular by other artists. “Dedicated to the One I Love” was a major hit for both The Shirelles and The Mamas and the Papas. “Think” was a hit for James Brown. “Tell the Truth” was successfully covered by Ray Charles. Chuck Berry even copied how Lowman Pauling played — with his guitar slung low at his knees.

The group created the ladder for others to climb, but they never reached the top themselves by standards of commercial success.

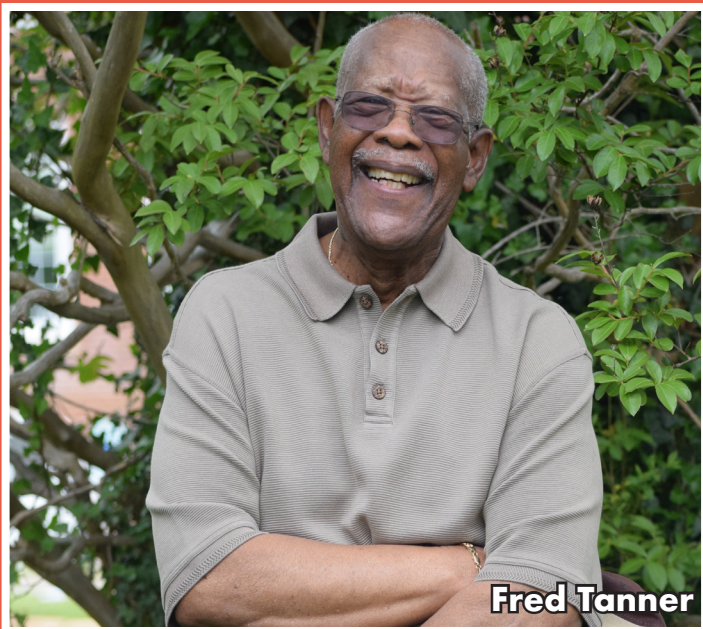
Ray Charles, James Brown and Chuck Berry were among the first 10 inductees into the inaugural Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1986. Aretha Franklin was selected the next year. The 5 Royales had to wait until 2015 — an honor that was long overdue. Unfortunately, none of the band members were alive to experience their induction. Their relatives accepted the prize on

their behalf.

Fred Tanner, brother of Eugene and Johnny, says the group never received the same acclaim because they were ahead of their time and among the first to adopt their sound and style.



The “5” Royales historic marker (Photos taken by Maryam Khanum)



Even the band's own hometown did not give The 5 Royales the attention they deserved. Lowman Pauling's name was spelled wrong in his obituary, which was just a small blurb in the Winston-Salem Journal. His headstone had the wrong date of death.

"In highly segregated Winston-Salem, the Royales were beloved within the Black community but largely ignored by white society, with little mention of their achievements in the mainstream press," Lisa O'Donnell, a reporter at the Winston-Salem Journal, told Cleveland.com. O'Donnell has written extensively about The 5 Royales for the paper.

Now, there are physical symbols of The 5 Royales' success. Winston-Salem named a street "5 Royales Drive." The city placed a historical marker in front of Lowman Pauling's home on Rich Avenue, where the group rehearsed and often welcomed guests like Ray Charles. The group has a star in Winston-Salem's Walk of Fame. This spring, the city is expected to unveil a mural in their honor on the east-facing wall of the Big Winston Warehouse building on Trade Street, across the street from The Ramkat.

The 5 Royales split up in 1965 but their influence on rock, soul and R&B lives on. In the next two decades, Winston-Salem began to nurture a new sound of punk, alternative and rock.

Central to any band's story are the places where they played. These spots are the setting of the origin story, the breeding ground of talent. For the aspiring rock talent of the late '60s and '70s in Winston-Salem, this city was the perfect training ground.

Mitch Easter, Chris Stamey and Peter Holsapple, among other aspiring musicians, were all teenagers just starting to play guitar and write songs in garages in the late '60s. The three played in a variety of bands through high school and college, often with each other. They would later go on to play and produce music professionally. Easter produced R.E.M.'s early albums, and Stamey and Holsapple went on to form the dB's.

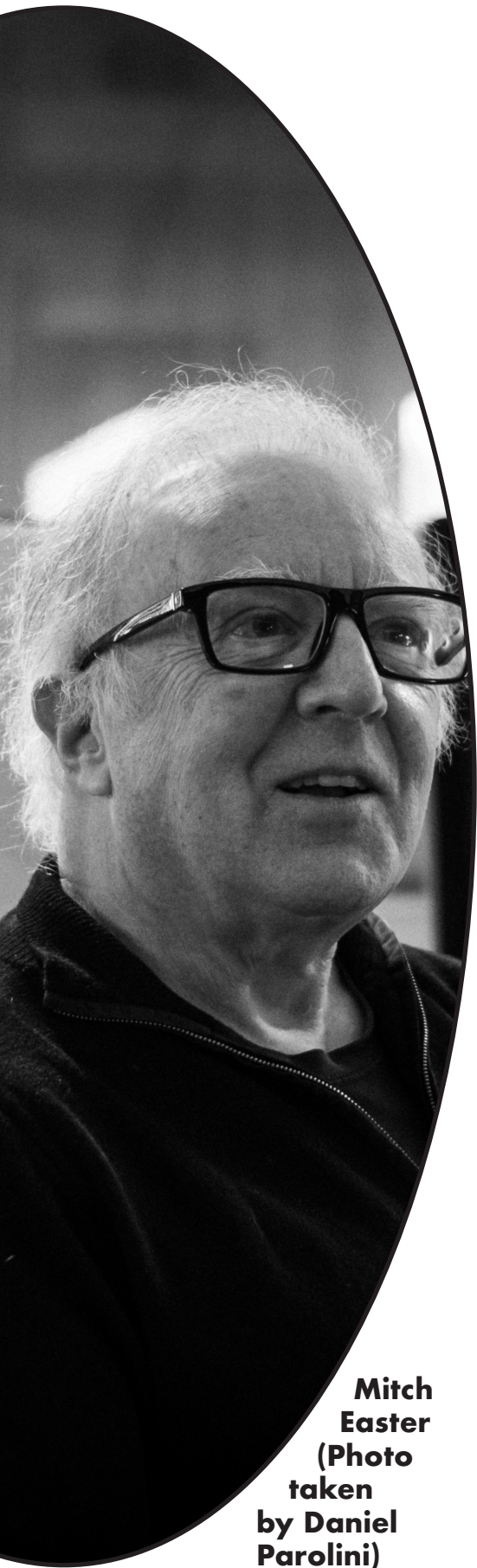
These guys got good because they had chances to play every weekend, and not at clubs at first. Instead, they played unlikely places — Saturday morning Kiddie Shows and churches.

Kiddie Shows were concerts exclusively for young people held on Saturday mornings at the Carolina Theatre, now the Stevens Center. Kids from 7 years old to young teens would attend. One poster advertises admission as costing 35 cents, and for that price, kids could see some of the best young bands around. The shows were hosted by Dick Benick, a DJ at the local radio station WTOB. Many credit him as the man who brought rock 'n' roll to young people in Winston-Salem during the '60s. Because of these shows, teenage bands were able to play on the Carolina Theatre stage, just like rock stars.

"It had velvet curtains on a huge stage, and it really felt like 'Okay, this is show business,'" said Easter, who remembers playing there with one of his early bands Sacred Irony and Imperturbable Teutonic Griffin. Yes, you read that right.

Sacred Irony and Imperturbable Teutonic Griffin were just two of the local bands to refine their craft at Kiddie Shows. Others included The Teen-Beets, Shadows of Thyme, The Versatiles and Captain Speed and the Fungi Electric Mothers.

Easter, Stamey and Holsapple



**Mitch
Easter
(Photo
taken
by Daniel
Parolini)**

were a part of a group at Reynolds High School who coined themselves the “Combo Corner.” A combo refers to a small band, but it wasn’t cool to say at the time. It was something only parents said to sound cool. These guys adopted the phrase ironically and called themselves the “Combo Corner.” They would sit in the parking lot before the bell rang, play and talk band stuff. Their long hair easily distinguished them from the jocks or the nerds.

In the ’70s, churches began to open up their dance halls and community centers for teens to play music at. Ardmore Methodist, Highland Presbyterian and Knollwood Baptist, among others, all invited teenagers to see bands play on Friday and Saturday nights. The gatherings are often referred to as “coffeehouses.”

Churches across the country were condemning rock ‘n’ roll as the “devil’s music,” but in Winston-Salem, churches were hiring bands and inviting the youth to enjoy it.

“Around the country, people were going into pulpits and denouncing this stuff,” Ed Bumgardner, a former music critic at the Winston-Salem Journal and local musician himself, said. “Around here, they were paying the kids.”

At bars, bands would have felt pressured to play the top hits of the day. At the churches, however, teen bands felt the freedom to play whatever they wanted, including original songs.

“It’s hard to overemphasize the importance of this: By opening their doors, the churches played a huge role in fostering creativity in the Winston-Salem music scene,” Chris Stamey writes in his book “Spy in the House of Loud,” which chronicles his time growing up in this golden age of rock music in Winston-Salem before he moved to New York.

Bumgardner remembers catching shows at the churches to see what talent was out there because he was trying to learn how to play. This is where Bumgardner saw Sam Moss and Chuck Dale Smith play with their band Imperturbable Teutonic Griffin.

“We’d just sit there and stare. Open mouths,” Bumgardner remembers.

Moss was a larger-than-life figure — a legend among the young musicians of the late ’60s and ’70s. He taught many of them how to play, or how to play better.

“He was just such a sort of towering figure among us teenagers,” Easter said. “He was such a good musician. Just being around him just made me get better.”

When Moss died by suicide in 2007, Bumgardner wrote his obituary for the Winston-Salem Journal titled “A beautiful eulogy to the guitar god no one’s heard of.”

“To all who crossed his path over the past 40 years — particularly musicians and music fans — Moss was the quintessential guitarist of Winston-Salem, a master of the instrument by any standard,” Bumgardner wrote.

In his ode to the musical legend, Bumgardner says to honor Moss by playing “Happy” by The Rolling Stones and turning the volume all the way up. It was one of his favorite albums, and Bumgardner says that lyrics say all that needs to be said about Moss.

Keep on dancin’
Keep me happy
Keep on dancin’
Keep me happy

The burgeoning of rock in the ’60s and ’70s paved the way for Winston-Salem to gain national acclaim in the ’80s. The dB’s rose to prominence in this decade, becoming an influential band in the jangle

pop and indie rock genres. Although formed in New York, the band was always closely affiliated with Winston-Salem.

Easter opened The Drive-In Studio in 1980, which operated out of his parents' garage and attracted nationally acclaimed talent. It was here that he produced R.E.M.'s debut single "Radio Free Europe." The Drive-In closed in 1993, and Easter now operates Fidelitorium Recordings in Kernersville, a private residential recording studio. The Avett Brothers, Mandolin Orange (now Watchhouse) and Rainbow Kitten Surprise have all recorded sessions there.

Two iconic clubs — Ziggy's and Baity's — opened around this time and brought national acts to Winston-Salem. Bumgardner remembers that on any given Friday or Saturday night the two clubs would be packed.

"For here, these places were palaces — rundown palaces — but palaces," said Bumgardner, who not only covered performances at these clubs for the Winston-Salem Journal but also played there with his band The Allisons. "It was exciting. It was great. Live music still hadn't become greed-driven. Bands were just begging to play at Ziggy's and Baity's. They were turning down big bands. They really wanted to play there."

Places like The Warehouse (now Krankies), Club Hellenbach and Pablo's (later 533 Uprisings) hosted more underground artists. The popular punk bands in Winston-Salem like Squatweiler, Codeseven and Naked Angels played these spots.

Jonathan Kirby, local musician and music history buff, says that when he went off to college at UNC-Chapel Hill in the late '90s and early 2000s, he realized that Winston-Salem's sound was unique because much of it was original.

"There was never any playing covers in Winston-Salem," he said. "All the bands that we loved wrote original songs. It made me realize that that was something that was happening here that wasn't happening elsewhere."

Each interview for this story was a walk down memory lane. The memories first led to Church Street, where the Moravians gathered each day to sing hymns at church. Then to the tobacco auctions on Trade Street, the drink houses on the east side of town and to Rich Avenue,

"The older generation swaps photos and stories on Facebook... The new young artists are carving their own way."

where The 5 Royales rehearsed. The stories traveled back to the Carolina Theatre, the church coffeehouses in Ardmore and the parking lot of Reynolds High.

The places of the music scene look different now. Many iconic, long-time establishments have closed, leaving fewer places to play and a bitter nostalgia for those who remember their glory. Baity's closed in 1993. The original Ziggy's on Baity Street closed in 2007, and its reincarnation at Trade and 9th closed

in 2016. The Garage closed in 2018. Winston-Salem still boasts strong local talent — they just don't have as many places to play. The Ramkat, Gas Hill, ALV Nightclub, Monstercade, The Den and breweries are some of the new live music spots. It is only natural for the places of the music scene to change. It has throughout history.

"I'd say what was a club scene turned into a brewery music scene for a lot of the locals," said Emmett, co-owner of The Ramkat.

Winston-Salem's music legacy endures by looking both backward and forward. The older generation swaps photos and stories on Facebook groups and blogs. Many of the guys from the '60s and '70s rock scene are still playing. The new young artists are carving their own way, establishing new places that will be the backdrop to their stories.

While reporting this story, I met three family members of The 5 Royales at a diner on Peters Creek Parkway. As Fred Tanner was telling a story about hearing The 5 Royales on the radio for the first time, a man sitting alone in the booth behind us chimed in.

"I used to lay under the covers at night and listen to WAAA," the man said. WAAA was the first Black programmed radio station in North Carolina.

Tanner didn't realize the man was eavesdropping. Since I was facing him from my side of the booth, I could tell he was hanging on to every word. He didn't know his breakfast would be accompanied by great stories about musical legends he loved. After finishing his meal, I could tell he wasn't ready to leave yet. He ordered chocolate cake.

Eventually, he got up to leave and stopped by our table.

"You've inspired me," he said. "Thank you."



W.C. WEST-FIELDS
My Little Chickadee

REPRESENTING THE
WOMAN: ANGELA AND
SYSTEMS
Black & White
Book

M.A.S.H.
Extended Pic.
LaserDisc

Numark MI

An
Old Gold & Black
publication