



THE SWAN

Winter Edition- 2024



Cover art by Mia Hammond

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A Note from The Editors

Welcome to our first edition of The Swan, The Winter Edition! We have loved compiling this issue, with contributions from Lydia Shearman, Olivia Webb, Holly Regan, Bill Vowles, Lyla Beech, Ria Darr, and a wider team who helped with planning, as well as the fantastic cover from Mia Hammond. In this issue we cover politics, culture as well as interviews and submissions from the Sixth Form. We have also shared some photos from the recent Drama Showcase, and I know that in our next edition we would love to be able to share more work from students in younger years.

As mentioned, we cover a few topics in politics, starting with opinions from both sides of the recent American election, written before the results of Donald Trump's win. Whether or not you support the choice America has made, we hope the few pages covering these topics help remind of the importance of keeping engaged and up- to date with politics, nationally, but also internationally, and even though it can seem more difficult, especially at a time that can seem frightening.

As well as the politics pages, we hope you enjoy the music, entertainment and gossip pages that follow, we are really grateful for all the amazing support and contributions we have had!

Thank you very much,
Olive Hosker and Tori Prewett

The American Election

Written a week before the election

Bill Vowles
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Kamala Harris

With less than a week to go until America takes to the polls for their national Presidential Election, the two frontrunners are still indistinguishable. The last week of October saw Democrat nominee Kamala Harris and Republican nominee Donald Trump separated in the opinion polls consistently by a single percentage point, with Harris on 48% and Trump on 47%. This is the Democrat section, so let's talk Harris. The elder of two daughters born to a Jamaican father and an Indian mother, Kamala Devi Harris comes to the presidential stage with a shining career in law and politics behind her. A former San Francisco District Attorney, Attorney General of California and US Senator as well as her current role as US Vice President, Harris remains, unlike her opponent, unprosecuted by any criminal court – more than can be said for Trump, who stands for President whilst having been impeached twice (for context, these make up half of only four impeachments ever prosecuted against US Presidents), charged with four counts of conspiracy, accused of conspiring to overturn the Georgia election results of 2020 and of the mishandling of classified documents, and convicted of thirty-four counts of falsifying business records. He remains the only US President ever to have been criminally convicted, and his claims that the Biden administration was behind the trials remains completely without even basic evidence. But slandering the opponent can be left to the Republicans, so back to Harris: her policies that she hopes to implement as President have drawn widespread support, as shown by regularly extensive crowds at her rallies. A survey of 2,122 US adults in September 2024 found that of the five most popular economic policies proposed during the presidential race by both candidates, four were proposed by Harris. She confidently leads state opinion polls in battleground states such as Wisconsin and Michigan, and the results of the ABC News presidential debate on the 11th of September is evidence enough to establish Harris as the cleaner and much more competent presidential candidate. It now sits with the American people to decide what kind of future they want.

- Holly Regan



Donald Trump

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris Presidential Administration has been the worst in American history! Under this administration, gas prices have risen 57%, whereas in Trump's years it was 3.4% ! The price of groceries, up roughly 20%, whilst just 2.2% during the Trump years . Real earnings per hour during Biden's administration , down 4-5%, whereas the same thing grew 4-5% per week during Trump's presidency. Inflation in the Trump years overall increased just 1.9%, during the Biden years, a 20 - 24 percentage increase! The failure doesn't stop there ! Biden's campaign seeks to paint Trump as a fascist. But this is the same man who centralized his power in an autocratic manner, to implement autocratic policies, which is what fascism is. He's done this by firing USA military personnel who refused to have a covid 19 vaccine, suing Texas and Arizona for not complying with his awful Mexico America border policies that have allowed for 3.2 million more illegal immigrants to come to America than during the Trump years, people who traffic drugs like fentanyl across the border and who have been known for violent crimes and identity fraud. The administration has presided over a horrific foreign policy that saw a disgraceful / chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, resulting in the deaths of USA military personnel and some being left behind, leaving behind billions of dollars of equipment the Taliban are now using, whilst also easing sanctions on the fear mongering Islamic Republic of Iran, such as in the field of oil, who can now use the money they've earned from the eased sanctions to fund terror across the middle east, such as in Yemen, resulting in needless humanitarian situations, as well as the same money and resources, to fund and equip Hamas for the October 7th terror attack, something pushing the world closer to world war III . Not only were the economic policies under Trump much better, as previously mentioned, violent crime, burglaries and murders decreased in America, whilst funding for the police increased. So, when choosing who to endorse this year at the American Presidential election, vote for a safer America, wealthier America, a safer world , and a healthier America, with the new, Make America Healthy again, and where taxes aren't sent away in aid to Ukraine, \$165 Billion worth, but is invested in America. Thank you!

- Bill Vowles

The History of Christmas Theatre

The traditional British pantomime differs from traditional theatre, comedy, or musicals in many ways. They often consist of slapstick comedy, a storyline of good vs evil, and colourful eccentric costumes. It's a theatrical form that defies convention and embraces chaos, inviting everyone -regardless of age- to join in on the fun. Whilst British Christmas pantomimes are beloved in the UK, they have found new homes and local adaptations across the world, reflecting each culture's unique take on the festive spirit.

In the United States annually many communities host performances of the Nutcracker, an elaborate ballet production incorporating vibrant, often grandiose staging, and features a mix of classical ballet and whimsical, festive elements. Over the years, it has evolved to reflect American culture. Its widespread popularity has helped cement the *Nutcracker* as a key part of the American holiday season.

The Swedish tradition of Lucia takes place on December 13th and features processions with girls dressed in white, crowned with candles, singing traditional songs to mark the beginning of the Christmas season.

The tradition of Pasados (meaning Inn or Lodging) in Mexico began as a way for the Spaniards to teach native people about the origins of Christmas. On the nine nights leading up to Christmas celebrations, reenactments of Mary and Joseph's search for lodging take place often alongside music dancing, and the breaking of Piñatas filled with sweet treats.



Each of these performances reflects the cultural values and traditions of the respective countries, making Christmas a rich tapestry of celebrations worldwide. There are endless examples of these performances such as Simbang Gabi in the Phillies, Presepe in Italy, and Folia de Reis in Brazil. While many of these performances focus on religion and cultural narratives, the British pantomime adapts fairy tales with a playful twist, often incorporating contemporary music and dance. Each offers a unique lens through which we can appreciate the joy and celebration of the winter season.

- Olivia Webb

Local pantomimes and Christmas shows to see this year:

Theatre Royal Bath - Snow White and the seven Dwarfs starring Olivia Birchenough

Komedia- A Christmas Carol with Count Arthur Strong

Bristol Hippodrome – Goldilocks and the three bears

Redgrave theatre- Jack and the Beanstalk

Old Fire Station- Panto of the Opera

Bristol Old Vic- Little Red (and other Winter Tales)

The GRAMMYS

The nominations for the 67th annual GRAMMY awards were announced on Friday 8th November, to be held on February 2nd, 2025, in Los Angeles. Hundreds of artists were nominated across 94 categories that span all genres of music. The pop categories this year have been dominated by break-out female pop-stars, such as Chappell Roan, with 6 nominations since her sudden rise to fame earlier this year. Sabrina Carpenter, with her hit album Short n' Sweet, also received 6 nominations, marking her transition to mainstream pop. Both Billie Eilish and Charli XCX received 7 nominations, for their chart-topping albums. However, no-one capped Beyoncé's 11 nominations, equating to 99 nominations across her career, making her the most nominated artist in GRAMMY history.

67th GRAMMY Nominations 2025

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

New Blue Sun

André 3000 35.6M streams

Cowboy Carter

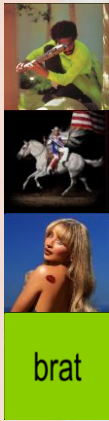
Beyoncé 1.5B streams

Short n' Sweet

Sabrina Carpenter 4.2B streams

Brat

Charli XCX 1.2B streams



Djesse Vol. 4

Jacob Collier 85M streams

Hit Me Hard And Soft (My Pick)

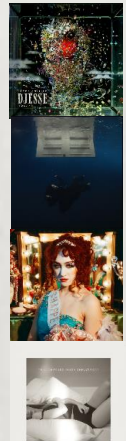
Billie Eilish 4.3B streams

The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess

Chappell Roan 2.2B streams

The Tortured Poets Department

Taylor Swift 6.1B streams



SONG OF THE YEAR

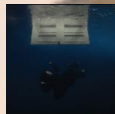
A Bar Song (Tipsy)

Shaboozey 890M streams



Birds of a Feather

Billie Eilish 1.4B streams



Die With a Smile

Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars

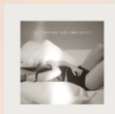
910M streams



Fortnight

Taylor Swift ft Post Malone

720M streams



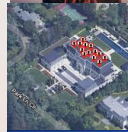
Good Luck, Babe! (My pick)

Chappell Roan 930M streams



Not Like Us

Kendrick Lamar 890M streams

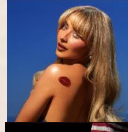


Please Please Please

Sabrina Carpenter 990M streams

Texas Hold 'Em

Beyoncé 560M streams



BEST NEW ARTIST

Benson Boone

Sabrina Carpenter

Doechii

Khruangbin

Raye (My Pick)

Chappell Roan

Shaboozey

Teddy Swims

BEST POP SOLO PERFORMANCE

Bodyguard

Beyoncé

Espresso

Sabrina carpenter

Apple (My Pick)

Charli XCX

Birds of a Feather

Billie Eilish

Good Luck, Babe!

Chappell Roan

BEST POP VOCAL ALBUM

Eternal Sunshine

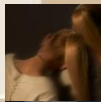
Ariana Grande

Hit me Hard And Soft

Billie Eilish

Short n' Sweet (My Pick)

Sabrina Carpenter



The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess

Chappell Roan

The Tortured Poets Department

Taylor Swift



How do nominations work?

The GRAMMYS are the only awards that are voted for by other musicians in the music industry. The process starts with the artists entering their work into consideration, followed by a screening process where over 350 experts check if the entry is valid and if it is placed in the right category for entry. To officially nominate an artist, academy members vote in up to 10 categories, across up to 3 genre fields (the members vote in their fields of expertise). The members also vote in the 6 general fields: Record Of The Year, Album Of The Year, Song Of The Year, Best New Artist, Producer Of The Year, (Non-Classical) and Songwriter Of The Year, (Non-Classical).

How does voting work?

After the official nominations have been announced, academy members cast their votes in up to 10 categories, in up to 3 fields of their expertise (plus the 6 general fields). Ballots are checked by independent accounting firm Deloitte & Touche LLP. The winner of each category is announced at the ceremony, with each winner presented with the iconic GRAMMY trophy, whilst every nominee receives a certificate and medal to recognise their nomination.

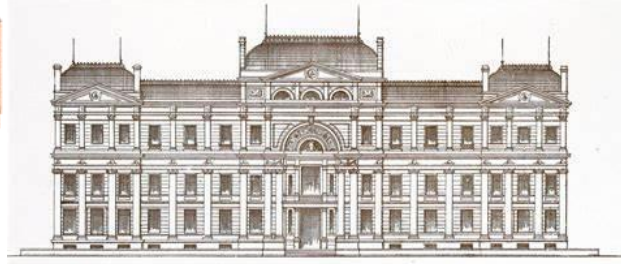
- Lydia Shearman

Some photos from the recent Drama Showcase...



Home Politics

Writing on the state of British politics in October 2024 can't begin without discussing the controversial Autumn Budget, announced on the 30th of October by Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves, the UK's very first female to take on the job. While much of it will seem irrelevant to school and university students, there are a couple of key areas that will affect us – mainly, the rise in National Minimum Wage (NMW) for all age brackets and bus ticket prices for everywhere apart from London and Greater Manchester. The NMW goes up in April, the beginning of every financial year, annually and sets the minimum amount per hour that an employee can earn, especially those on zero-hours contracts; from April 2025 to 2026, the NMW for 16 to 17-year-olds will rise from £6.40 to £7.55, and from £8.60 to £10.00 for 18 to 20-year-olds. This has been welcomed by those living off this type of wage, though the jump in numbers was met with resistance from opposing parties such as the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats because of the pain it will cause employers when put alongside the changes in National Insurance tax contributions that they have to make – former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak told the Chancellor she had “broken her promises” to British people. Bus ticket prices, also known as bus fares, are regulated mostly by Westminster for services provided in England, however in London and Greater Manchester, where buses are under public control and have different rules, prices can be set based on decisions made by the council rather than private bus companies such as FirstBus. Closer to home, there used to be a £2 cap on how much bus companies could charge for a single or one-way journey ticket



– this was scrapped in the Budget in favour of a 50% rise, setting the new limit at £3 instead. Many students at Oldfield rely on buses to get to school, so this will cause a bit of headache for parents having to spend more on getting their children to and from school every day. Aside from the Budget, time has certainly flown since the initiation of the Labour government, led by PM Sir Keir Starmer and Deputy PM Angela Rayner, into Westminster on the 4th of July 2024. It's been 119 days already, and the government has been hard at work trying to mop up the economic instability left by the previous Conservative administration – and the new Cabinet made sure to repeat this fact over the first few weeks in Parliament! Across the world, groundbreaking moments came in left, right and centre: Mexico swore in its first female President Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo; Russia saw Vladimir Putin claim a controversial fifth presidential term and the third consecutive term after having amended the rules to allow him to get around the two-term limit; and President Joe Biden sensationally stood down from the 2024 presidential race less than four months before the elections on the 5th November, to a great public reaction.

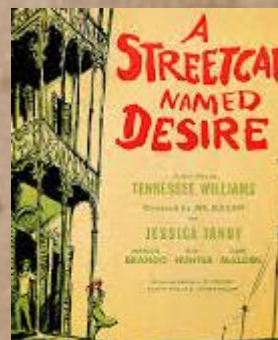
- Holly Regan

Two Plays in Two Days

English Literature students in Year 12 and 13 got the chance to watch two of the plays we study, *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams and *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster.

On the 27th of November at 7.30 we went into the Rondo Theatre, Larkhall. As we got comfortable, we realised we had all sat on the wrong side of the theatre. After all shuffling across and finding our *actual seats*, the play began. Overall, I think The Rondo Theatre Company's production was fantastic and very accurate, almost exactly following the script. From discussion, the only criticism I have is that the casting was different than how some of us pictured Stanley. But he did play him very well and I think we also acknowledge that we have been very influenced by Marlon Brando's 1950's portrayal. I also noticed chemistry in places I hadn't considered or read, such as between characters Blanche and Mitch. But what stood out to me the most is the stunning stagecraft. For an amateur theatre company, the use of silhouettes integrated with music and lighting to show the state of Blanche's mind was incredible. On top of this, the use of drinks as props almost made alcohol another, increasingly prominent character, reflecting the deteriorating condition of the characters. Whilst aspects of the performance did differ from my reading, the accurate use of the script and gorgeous stage work presented a great performance of William's extraordinary play.

The next day, after a punctured minibus tyre, we set out to London. Once we arrived in Richmond, we got the overground to Waterloo, before walking to Trafalgar. After a quick lunch break, we headed into the Trafalgar theatre at around 2.30. Despite being much larger than The Rondo, thanks to the angle of the seating, everyone seemed to have a great view of the stage, creating an atmospheric and intimate mood even before the play began. I think that this interpretation of *The Duchess of Malfi* was fantastic.



I was sceptical at first as I knew it was a modern adaptation, but rather than overusing aspects over modernism, it adapted the Jacobean play to make it translate to a modern audience, without losing the beauty of its original language or censoring any aspects of the plot. It didn't change for a contemporary audience to try and make it more digestible, only more understandable. I think it was a really stunning and impressive performance that while having a very simple set didn't lose any details or grandeur, and when differing from my reading, only highlighted attributes of characters or relationships I hadn't seen.

Overall, I think that the modernist *Duchess of Malfi* allowed more obvious changes in approaches to certain characters, that clearly strayed from the script but purposely, to highlight traits we may not have read. Whereas in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as it almost entirely followed the original script, when characters were presented differently it almost seemed in conflict to the audiences reading, as it wasn't overt in changes of presentation. However, for two plays written at very different times, and presented in very different ways the continuous issues seen through both were presented beautifully and individually stood out strikingly in their styles.

- Olive Hosker

A Winter Feast

As the holiday season approaches, there is nothing quite like a selection of homemade treats. Try out some of the recipes below to help spread and savour the flavours of this Christmas season. Perfect for a Christmas gift!



Christmassy Biscuits

1. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Line a baking tray
2. Cream the butter and sugar together in a bowl
3. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract until well combined.
4. Stir in the flour until the mixture comes together as a dough.
5. Roll the dough out on a lightly floured work surface
6. Using biscuit cutters or a glass, cut biscuits out of the dough and carefully place onto the baking tray
7. Bake the biscuits for 8-10 minutes, or until pale golden-brown. Set aside to harden for 5 minutes, then cool on a wire rack.
8. For the icing, sift the icing sugar into a large mixing bowl and stir in enough water to create a smooth mixture. Before spreading on top of the cooled biscuits.

100g unsalted butter
100g caster sugar
1 free-range egg
1 tsp vanilla extract
275g plain flour
400g Icing Sugar
Water

Why not use a straw to create a hole in the biscuits to make Christmas tree decorations?

Cranberry And Apple Chutney



1. In a small saucepan put in all the ingredients. Stir before placing on a medium heat.
2. Bring to a boil then turn down the heat and to let it cook for 45 minutes, until it has thickened slightly.
3. Spoon into 2 sealable jars and seal them.

325 cooking apples, chopped small
125 dries cranberries
1/2 onion
175ml cider vinegar
100g caster sugar
1 tsp ginger, turmeric, cumin, coriander and salt

Cheese Stars



200g cheddar
50g soft unsalted butter
100g plain flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ginger

1. Preheat oven to 180°C
2. Put all ingredients into a food processor and blitz until the dough comes together. Form into flat discs, wrap in cling film and refrigerate for 15 minutes.
3. Roll out the disc of dough on a lightly floured surface to about the thickness of a pound coin and cut out your cheese stars.
4. Line a flat baking sheet arrange on top, then pop into the oven for 12-15 minutes, by which time the stars will be puffed and golden
5. Once the stars are cooked, transfer to a wire rack to cool a little.

Gourmet Hot Chocolate



1. Heat a pan over a stove with medium heat. Pour in milk and heavy whipping cream.
2. Let the milk and cream heat up for 30 seconds – 1 minute and add in cocoa powder. Whisk until fully dissolved.
3. Add in chocolate and whisk until it melts completely. Turn off stove.
4. Pour in sugar. Remove from heat and serve.

180g whole milk
50g heavy whipping cream
1 tbsp cocoa powder
30g dark chocolate
2 tsp sugar
whipped cream

Enjoy your
Christmassy snacks!

- Olivia Webb

Confessions and Complaints

*Confessions and complaints submitted
anonymously by members of the sixth
form*

- Lyla Beech and Ria Darr

Confessions:

1. *'One time at work I was on customer service and my phone was muted the whole time'*

-In my honest opinion I would quit and never return.

2. *'I said you too when the waiter told me to enjoy my meal'*

-Very well mannered and demure! Nothing to be ashamed of there.

3. *'I blocked the sixth form toilets once'*

-Oh goodness... clean up on stall 3!!

3. *'Luca hides things up his nose'*

-That's where the uno cards went!

4. *'I flip my parents off behind the door when they annoy me'*

- I'm sure they do the same to you.

5. *'I had a twerk off with George and lost'*

- Just keep trying, I've heard he practices a lot!

Complaints:

1. *'Dylan keeps eating food off the floor'*

- Please report him to the NHS, this may be a health hazard.

2. *'Ned keeps farting in class and it really smells'*

- Never hate on something like this, you never know what he could be going through.

3. *'Eddy keeps distracting everyone by doing Fortnite dances in class'*

- At least he has a passion!

4. *'Dirty windows'*

- I think paying attention to your teacher instead of the cleanliness of the windows might be more beneficial.

5. *'Tutor should be optional We have to come in to tutor everyday if I have a lesson last period why should i be in school all day'*

- Think about having a professional conversation with our Sixth form leaders Mr Nash, Mr Hayward, and Miss Francis. If that's a no, then coincidentally, accidentally 'miss' your bus.
wink

Teacher Talks

Interview 1 – Mr Greenough and Mr Duckworth!

MR DUCKWORTH (interviewed with Mr Greenough)

Biggest student ick?

“Lying when it’s obvious you’ve been caught. So, when you can see someone do something and then they still deny it, and say no it wasn’t me, it wasn’t me. Yeah, that definitely”

Biggest teacher ick?

“Teachers don’t annoy us” whilst grinning
Laughing at Mr Greenough saying “Not up to date enough on current films and music, it annoys us when they just don’t understand references to culture, we find that very annoying”

Mr Greenough - “Its more than 1 person” They both start chuckling

“That is my one as well!”

Lyla – “I thought it was high vis jacket wearers”

“It’s useful to know where sir is at all times to see him.”

Worst classroom story?

“It was my old job way, way back, I was just qualified, on my first day of teaching fully. I tried to teach this year 9 class at the end of the day, and in the lesson, a couple of them were talking, so I asked one of them to stay in behind the lesson. I started talking to them; saying, “you were a bit disruptive”. So, he picked up a chair and chucked it across the classroom, knocked one of the lights out. Then he headbutted the wall. I said, “I think you should go home now!”. I didn’t know what to do, he thought “I am out of my depth, and I’m not sure if I can do this.” It was terrible, and I didn’t know what to do. It was 17 years ago.”

Best class you’ve taught?

“I did have an A-level sociology class from another school, they were just amazing. They had different ways of memorising the sociologists’ names, and they had all these little jokes. They were a lot of fun, and they were the first-year 12+ 13 class I’d have all the way through A-levels.

Ria - “Any from this school?”

“Maybe my year 10 GCSE class that I picked up when I just started”

Do teachers secretly have favourite students?

“I agree with what Mr Greenough said there completely” (nodding his head as well)

MR GREENOUGH (interviewed with Mr Duckworth)

Biggest student ick?

“Mine will be when children don’t reach their full potential. They’re clearly very clever and don’t apply themselves, it’s very frustrating.”

Biggest teacher ick?

“Teachers don’t annoy us” whilst grinning... awkward laughing

“That’s quite a hard one that. What do teachers do that annoy us?... Not up to date enough on current films and music, it annoys us when they just don’t understand references to culture, we both find that very annoying!”

Worst classroom story?

“I’m not sure if I can tell this. I worked in a school 25 years ago, and I worked so hard to get a class to do the planets in order. I mean I’d done it all, we had done pictures, we had named them, we had done them in order, we’d done mnemonics. As a teacher I thought, I’d nailed this, then I asked a child “name the 4th planet from the sun” bearing in mind I’d got this ready, and very keenly and enthusiastically he said, “It’s carrot Sir”, I thought I’d teach this so well. They were year 9. My teaching had a rethink after that.”

Best class you’ve taught?

“I’ve taught only 2 classes in Oldfield so far, and they’ve both been fantastic. I think I’d have to go with last year’s year 11 class.”

Do teachers secretly have favourite students?

“No” (whilst nodding his head)

- Ria Darr and Lyla Beech