

# The Live Poets Society

Poetry club serves as an outlet for students' self expression

by Yiorgos Zervas and Emily Challenger

Race, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are just a few of the touchy subjects that New Trier's Poetry Club.

In many other areas of discourse, expressing opinion is not always an easy thing, especially with so many dissenting opinions on a wide range of different topics. In Poetry Club, the students' personal thoughts and experiences are center stage, but the crowd never boo's.

When asked about how students treated each other's poetry, senior Mikey Ruby said that they "give me helpful feedback and criticism, offering new ideas and their own perspectives."

Poetry Club has become a safe place for many New Trier students to come and express themselves. As John O'Connor, one of the Poetry Club sponsors said, "The point [of Poetry Club] is to share ideas, to express ourselves, [and] try to understand ourselves and the world better."

This gives students a place where they can feel safe from ridicule or social rejections.

O'Connor said that Poetry Club is "a safe place where people can experiment with language and write in a different way than they're [normally] able to."

This atmosphere of comfort and assurance provides a place for students to talk about their lives with their peers.

O'Conner said, "People have come out in Poetry Club, some people have admitted that they have been victimized in some way in their lives, some people have admitted to being victimizers."

Poetry Club has been giving students the opportunity to talk about sensitive topics while simultaneously feeling free from the



New Trier Poetry Club performing at Louder than a Bomb in 2013 | Archives

pressures that surround them.

Ruby says, "It's difficult to reveal personal emotions because people don't typically share them as often as they maybe should." Though with the supportive atmosphere that Poetry Club gives to their members, Ruby also explains that once you do share "it is relieving because you are not alone."

Most members believe that through poetry, they can connect to other members. Ruby explains, "Poetry is one way for students to use their imagination and to express themselves, all while tapping into the universal human experience."

Senior Musa Abbasi agrees with that concept. One of his goals in Poetry club is "to further my understanding of my classmates and gain a greater appreciation for them."

Because the club is solely made up of teenagers, writers of the modern era are discussed more often: not so much Lord Byron but more Kendrick Lamar. A favorite of the club is rapper, activist, educator, poet, and author Nate Marshall. Marshall is one of the young stars of "Louder than a Bomb" (LTAB), a documentary about a high school poetry competition that takes place at the end of February every year.

Slam poetry is fairly popular among club members. Take Abbasi, a senior who has been attending poetry club since he was a freshman.

He prepares for LTAB by "free writing... I just write out all sorts of ideas I have for poems. The one that I think has the greatest potential to be a meaningful slam poem, I write out a draft for."

Slam is more of a get together and less of a competition. Their slogan reads, "It's not about the points, it's about the poetry," which is reflective of their nonchalant attitude towards competition and emphasis on expression.

In the beginning of February, they have a get together for all poets participating in slam. They mix the crowd up, leaving members astray from their own group then put them to work writing poetry with people that they may have never met.

All students are welcomed to join and discuss their pieces in Poetry Club. O'Connor said, "We try to invent other ways to give people a space to perform their poems."

Whether it be sonnets, limericks or lyrical poems, all students are encouraged to discuss their pieces with their peers.

No matter how a student wants to express themselves, the design behind Poetry Club is to give students that outlet. Abbasi said, "If I weren't able to express myself through poetry, I would have a great deal more difficulty handling my emotions."

# ABC Family name change appeals to wider audiences

The new Freeform will continue to air the typical ABC shows

by Brooke Bernstein

In order to appeal to a wider audience, there will be a new name showing up on people's DVRs for what was formerly known as ABC Family.

This January, ABC Family is changing their network's name to Freeform. Even though this may be a shock, Tom Ascheim, the president of ABC Family, told Entertainment Weekly, "For us, this doesn't feel like a radical departure; this is an evolution."

The network's name change is meant to appeal to an audience of people called "The Becomers."

This term is directed towards people ages 14 to 34. According to Variety, "The Becomer audience reflects the network's efforts to keep up with its millennial viewers as they grow up."

Senior Jamie Knippen believes that the new name, Freeform, was chosen in order to connect with more people and to flow better with newer popular culture norms.

Though she enjoys the name, Knippen is unsure if it's going to stick: "It's like the Sears Tower. It should be called the Willis Tower, but everyone still calls it the Sears Tower."

One of the biggest concerns for ABC Family viewers is whether their favorite shows will change. Ascheim said on TV Line, "Freeform will deliver new, exciting, original content as well as all the favorite shows our viewers already love on ABC Family."

Senior Zach Struckman said part of the reason that he likes ABC Family is because they always have good movies to watch. The name "ABC Family" represents a clean, fun, and family-oriented network, whereas Struckman said, "Freeform

sounds like a television show and not a channel."

Also on Variety, an article called, "ABC Family to Rebrand Network 'Freeform' in January" said, "In addition to adapting to the growing audience, the rebrand is also an effort to reach new viewers who may associate ABC Family with too much, well, family."

This isn't the first time that this channel has undergone a name change. Since the original launch of the network in 1977, its name has been changed several times.

After Pat Robertson, the original owner, sold the network, the name was changed to The Family Channel. Later, it was resold to a company that named it Fox Family Channel.

When Disney purchased it in 1991, the name was finally changed to ABC Family.

"I like it when ABC Family does 25 Days of Christmas," senior Hanna Skinner said. "ABC Family is known for having great movie and TV show marathons."

According to the website "The Top Tens," some of ABC's most successful shows were *Pretty Little Liars*, *The Fosters*, *Twisted*, and *Switched at Birth*.

Senior Tommy Agase's take on the name Freeform is that the name doesn't really make sense. He thinks that it would have been more beneficial for ABC Family to have promoted the new name, but with a little explanation on why they changed it.

Agase said, "If they want their viewers to understand what's happening with the network, they should be informed about the new name, with the background behind it."

Ascheim added to the Variety article, "It made us realize that for us to grow and reach new customers, we really had to do something about the perception gap, and not be hindered by our label," he said. "Freeform evokes the spirit and adventure of our audience."

# Gavin forms band, making it in the music industry

The New Trier grad's personal style has developed with age

by Jasmine Gonzalez

Since posting a viral acoustic cover of Willow Smith's "Whip My Hair" on YouTube back in 2010, New Trier graduate Katie Gavin has come a long way in the music industry.

Gavin, 23, who is originally from Winnetka, currently resides in Southern California where she makes music with her band, MUNA.

The group, which consists of Gavin on lead vocals/production, Josette Maskin on lead guitar, and Naomi McPherson on rhythm guitar make "dark pop" music, which, as critic Ilana Kaplin describes it, "makes you want to cry and dance at the same time."

Fortunately, this is exactly what Gavin was going for, "I didn't just want to develop a rock sound...I wanted to develop music that would make people dance as well."

However, Gavin's sound hasn't always been this very interesting blend of rock and dance music. And the same can be said for her band mates— "all three girls came



Maskin, Gavin, and McPherson together form their band, MUNA | Gavin

from really different [musical] backgrounds." From folk to R&B to progressive rock, the three completely different artists came together to form one sound. "All three of us feel really connected to what we created. It's just that we couldn't have done it on our own."

Gavin herself comes from a folk background. She mainly takes

after the only other musician in her family—her grandfather—who was a jazz trumpeter and band leader in the Korean War.

If you've ever heard the song "Whip My Hair," you most likely wouldn't associate it with acoustics. This, along with other covers and original songs Gavin posted years ago on YouTube, are the best evidence of

her folk background.

Although this may seem like a stark contrast from the dark pop Gavin currently produces, she claims this change in sound was a result of her growth as an adult.

As for her New Trier background, Gavin, who graduated with the class of 2011, spoke about the many different ways in which attending New Trier played an important role in both her personal and musical life.

"New Trier has a really special infrastructure for the arts, so I was lucky enough to feel part of a creative community and benefit from watching other creative people I admired as they were growing."

Johannah Wininsky, a dance teacher here at New Trier, recalls Gavin as "being open-minded, engaged, and imitative, a budding young artist. She brought a positive energy to class and it was contagious."

However, as all teenagers know, high school is tough, and being a talented musician did not excuse Gavin from enduring these difficulties.

"Attending high school in general (but specifically New Trier) is super stressful in terms of the way it can force you to construct and constrict your identity and thus your

art."

After graduating, Gavin moved across the country to attend the University of Southern California. Once on her own, Gavin was able to explore her own identity and art without pressure.

While doing so, she met the two other young artists and MUNA was born. Since then, the band put out their debut EP "More Perfect" and a handful of singles.

The band, which recently signed a record deal, is preparing to release the biggest collection of their work yet. Gavin would not reveal which record company MUNA signed with. The band, which handles everything concerning their work on their own (album artwork, production) doesn't want all their efforts to be overshadowed by their label.

Despite making it on MTV and (more recently) Buzzfeed's list of *16 Musicians To Add To Your New Years Playlist*, Gavin insists that MUNA is far from being famous.

She recalls the attention she received a few years ago, while still at New Trier, "That was really hard for me. I think I was too young."

As for any advice she has for upcoming artists, Gavin says to "allow yourself time to experiment and grow but also take it seriously."