

**THE CONCORDIA**  
**• COURIER •**  
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**“Come and See” Concordia’s musicians  
at Segerstrom Hall this Christmas**

REBEKAH MICHEL  
ARTS AND REVIEWS EDITOR &  
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Concordia’s annual Christmas concert is returning on Sun., Dec. 15 at 4 p.m. and 7:30 pm at the Renee and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. This year’s concert is titled “Come and See” which shares the hope and joy that Christmas brings as people reflect upon the birth of Christ.

The Christmas concert is one of the Music Department’s largest events, involving the orchestra, choirs and handbells, which shows the strength of the Music program. The Concordia Christmas concert is also filmed every year to be shown on PBS as an award-winning Christmas special.

“The fact that parts of this performance will be recorded to be included in the PBS special next year is always exciting. These concerts are a rewarding opportunity to share the efforts of Concordia’s Music Department with the nation and around the world,” said junior Annelise Jackson. Jackson is preparing for her third Segerstrom concert as a part of Concordia Choir.

Prior to the concert, there will be

a reception inviting prospective students to meet Concordia faculty and students before seeing the immense depth of the acclaimed Music Department. As past attendees noted, Concordia’s dedication to the meaning of Christmas and its commitment to the arts was apparent during every minute of the reception and the concert.

“Come and See” will feature instrumental ensembles, including the Concordia Symphony Orchestra, directed by Dr. Jeff Held and two handbell choirs: Spirit Bells, directed by Erik Der, and Concert Handbells, directed by Alex Guebert.

Held said that his favorite piece in the concert is composed by Guebert and is “an amazing new piece called ‘Come and See the Shining Star’ for orchestra, chorus and handbells...that ends in a huge, glorious sound on the words ‘angels singing.’ This all is extra-meaningful to me personally as my family commissioned this setting in memory of my dad, who passed away this year. He was a great church musician, and he loved using that hymn tune.”

In regards to choral music to expect at this year’s concert, the repertoire ranges from John William’s “Home Alone,” familiar carols and hymns, to newer

arrangements, including work from the Director of Commercial Music, Steve Young. The musical selections of the concert are sure to delight audiences.

Beyond the work of Concordia’s orchestra and handbell ensembles, the choral ensembles, under the direction of Dr. Michael Busch and Dr. Clarissa Shan, put forth valiant efforts to prepare for Concordia Christmas. With singers across Concordia Choir, The Master Chorale, Donne Di Canto and Men’s Chorus, the success of the concert is also reliant on their voices uplifting praises through the Renee and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall and to larger audiences from across the world.

For freshman commercial music and composition major Genesee Davis, the most exciting piece to bring to life is Young’s composition entitled “Upon This Night.” “I’m really excited for our choir to bring ‘Upon This Night’ to audiences this year. It has been a lot of fun preparing and recording one of your own director’s pieces. It is beautifully composed,” said Davis.

Senior Caleb Vaughan, a member of the Wind Orchestra and Spirit Bells, in addition to two choral ensembles, is looking forward to his second Concordia Christmas concert. He said, “My first Christmas concert was last year, and I had a blast doing it. My favorite part has to be hearing

everything come together; the full orchestra with a choir of over one hundred, in the big Segerstrom concert hall really is something magical.”

While Concordia may be a smaller university in size, the sounds of Concordia Christmas are robust and impactful to a wide audience. In prior years, rehearsals for this concert were held in the CU Center to accommodate the hundreds of musicians. However, due to the ongoing CU Center renovation project, the Music Department has demonstrated great creativity in gathering large amounts of musicians in either the Borland-Manske Center’s Choral Hall and even the Student Union Cafeteria. This year’s rehearsal process has proven that with great creativity a stellar concert and efficient rehearsals can still happen.

“Come and See! A Concordia Christmas” will take place on Dec. 15 at the Renee and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, with a sold-out performance at 4 p.m., and an evening performance at 7:30 p.m. To purchase remaining tickets for the 7:30 p.m. performance, please visit <https://www.scfta.org/events/2024/concordia-christmas>. Please note that Concordia student discounts do not apply to this concert.



**PICTURED ABOVE:** Concordia’s Christmas concert “Come and See” features several of our musical ensembles including the Concordia Choir and the Master Chorale under the direction of Dr. Michael Busch.

Photo courtesy of: Concordia Music Department



**PICTURED ABOVE:** “Come and See” features a full orchestra, handbells and a choir of over one hundred singers, resulting in a soaring sound in the Segerstrom Concert Hall.

Photo courtesy of: Concordia Music Department

# Intramural volleyball champions crowned

JOSE RODRIGUEZ  
STAFF WRITER

The Golden Eagles' annual Intramural Volleyball Championship recently took place on Nov. 17, and a thrilling third final set had fans on their feet. Out of eleven teams, "Team Evil" went on to be crowned the Intramural Volleyball Champions of fall '24.

Members of Team Evil commented on their strategy, challenges and experience playing through this season of intramural volleyball. Brighton Yap, a junior from Mililani, Hawaii, said that "The biggest challenge we faced was the other team we played against in the Championship game; every time we gained momentum, they stopped us; we overcame it by supporting each other and scoring points. Our chemistry thrived on laughing at ourselves; we messed up enough to warrant all of us to have an 'oops,' or 'my bad,' moment at some point."

Naomi Wong, a senior from San Francisco, is no stranger to winning volleyball championships. "It feels amazing to win once again as this is my third year in a row winning intramural volleyball. Our team started with many of our friends who have now graduated, and from our original team, we were only left with two or three, but it doesn't matter because our family grew the way it was meant to."

Wong said that, "The keys to our team's victory were that we didn't allow

ourselves to get in our heads and we didn't allow for others to get in our heads either we kept each other up, and we all try to think strategically whenever stuck in a difficult situation instead of trying to hit through it. Our opponents brought on the competition this year as we had lost our previous game with them and the first set of this game to them; their drive to want it as much as we did showed in how they fought to keep the ball up and in all the points they scored as well."

Jeremy Enriquez, a senior from the Bay Area, was thrilled about being named intramural volleyball champion for the fourth time in a row. Enriquez had this to say, "It honestly feels amazing. This win was my fourth intramural championship in a row, so it feels great to secure the last win."

Enriquez gave it his all to win his final championship. Enriquez said, "The biggest problem we faced was having everyone show up; everyone has busy schedules, and intramural was late at night, so not everyone was available at those times. We just managed to scrape through. It was a tremendous intramural volleyball season capped off with a great championship game."

The next Golden Eagles intramural season will be basketball in the spring. Be sure to sign up and get ready for a fun upcoming hoop season.



PICTURED ABOVE: The victorious members of "Team Evil"  
Photo courtesy of: Jose Rodriguez



PICTURED ABOVE: Students pack and present their boxes  
Photo courtesy of: Teresa McLaughlin

## Concordia Cares brings joy with Operation Christmas Child

TERESA MCLAUGHLIN  
STAFF WRITER

On Tues., Nov. 19, the Concordia Cares team transformed the CSLD patio into a hub of service and celebration with their annual Operation Christmas Child packing party. Students gathered at 8:30 p.m. to listen to Christmas music, decorate Christmas cookies and fill shoeboxes with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items for children all around the world. The event was a testament to Concordia's commitment to service, joyfully combining the Christmas spirit with the mission of giving back.

The event's atmosphere was lively and festive, with students decorating cookies, mingling and thoughtfully selecting items for the gift boxes. For Leah Sugita, a senior studying chemistry and a member of the Concordia Cares team, this sense of community was one of the best parts about the event. Sugita loved experiencing, "The joy of everyone coming together, and packing [the boxes] together and just feeling the Christmas spirit." Sugita also shared how special it is that the boxes they were packing, "are going to go out to kids that don't normally get presents. It's going to be life changing, honestly, for them."

This night of service meant so many different things for different students. For Abigail Morizini, a sophomore studying psychology, her participation was rooted in an old family tradition. "My grandma introduced me [to Operation Christmas Child] when I was little. All the cousins would go to her house and pack boxes and help shop sometimes," Morizini shared.

It's amazing to see students be part of something bigger than themselves and see them continue their traditions, even away from home.

Dylan Winroad, a sophomore majoring

in sports business, added gospel tracts to the boxes that he packed, sharing faith alongside the gifts. And Rider Natsuk, a junior majoring in marketing, reminisced about how much he would have enjoyed receiving a small sheriff's badge as a child, while others noted the popularity of items like scrunchies, notebooks and squishy toys.

The night held deeper meaning for some attendees such as Alanisa Fauci, a freshman majoring in biology. She shared her personal connection to the event and said "I've been in a position where I didn't receive gifts before, so it's pretty cool that our school gives gifts to other kids." Fauci went on to say, "I think the best gift of Christmas is giving... I think that's a powerful thing."

Danny Mendoza, a member of the Concordia Cares Team and a junior studying biology, shared that it is important to not only give back "to our community [but also] give back to others outside of Concordia." MJ Gomez, another member of the Concordia Cares Team and a sophomore studying business marketing, echoed these sentiments, by saying she hopes "people walk away feeling fulfilled" and motivated others to give back more in the future.

As the night wound down, Dylan Winroad summed up the sentiment of many attendees: "It's a great time, and it's all for a good cause. What better way to spend a Tuesday night?"

The Concordia students had packed approximately 200 shoeboxes—each filled with carefully selected items and a spirit of generosity. These gifts will be shipped around the world, bringing smiles and hope to children in need. Operation Christmas Child is just one of many initiatives by Concordia Cares. Leah Sugita hinted at upcoming projects, including an Earth Week celebration and a popular kayak cleanup event.

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# Concordia Honors community celebrates scholarship with meaningful dinner

HOPE YONEHARA  
STAFF WRITER

On Nov. 11, the Concordia Honors Program gathered together for the third annual Honors Forum, an event celebrating good food, scholarship and meaningful connections. The evening began with a special dinner that set the tone of the event. While students and faculty were enjoying their food, Dr. CJ Armstrong, director of the Honors Program, talked about the purpose of the event. “We are here to reinforce community among students and showcase good scholarship among students and faculty. To interact with each other over the great

questions, a great meal and great conversations,” he said.

Armstrong then presented awards to two people who best represented the Honors program. First, senior Ariel Spilman won the Inquisitio award, an award given to a student who best exemplifies curiosity, inquiry and a commitment to exploration. Next, Junior Olivia Thoeke won the Disiplina award, an award given to a student who exemplifies discipline in their field of study. These individuals were chosen not only for their achievements but because of their contributions to the Honors community.

After the awards were given

out, the evening shifted to intellectual exploration as Dr. Paul Elliott, assistant Professor of Theology, led a conversation on the nature of psalms. He began by discussing Psalm 19, which reflects how God speaks to us through nature. Elliott then shifted to Psalm 104, exploring why God created nature. According to him, God created nature to make him and humanity happy. Concluding his talk, Elliott shared a powerful message, “God made all these things, and He put me in charge. He trusts me.”

Elliott’s talk left an impression on many people, including Alannah Batty, a freshman marketing major and honors student. “I love how in-depth he went into each of the psalms and the interpretations he presented of their poetic elements. I learned so many new things about scripture and have a new perspective on the beauty of God’s creation,” she said.

Throughout the talk, Elliott

encouraged students to actively participate, frequently pausing to allow students to ask questions. This interactive approach created an inviting atmosphere that made students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and reflections. As Batty put it, “Everyone has great camaraderie and is eager to learn. Whether we are in class or doing talks like this, we always have such great and interesting and in-depth conversations.”

But these talks are also about community. As Audrey Kaufman, a freshman business administration and marketing major, put it “I am a freshman, so I am in the honors seminar,” she said. “I love the people in it. We all talk about how we have all become friends and are all going to miss each other.” Her words reflect the deep camaraderie that the Honors Program fosters, where intellectual conversation is paired with lasting personal connections.

To learn more about Honors and see how you can get involved, contact [cj.armstrong@cui.edu](mailto:cj.armstrong@cui.edu).

**THE WRITING STUDIO IS OPEN FOR LIMITED APPOINTMENTS DURING FINALS WEEK!**

**SCHEDULE YOUR SESSION NOW!**

## Open-mic arts event unites campus creatives

MADISON ZUNIGA  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Poets, musicians, dancers and visual artists alike gathered on the evening of Tues., Nov. 19 for a “music, mocktails and muses” event in the Creative Edge Living Learning Community. The two Resident Assistants behind this collaborative event sought to create an open and welcoming space for creative people of all types to share and celebrate their work.

Lucy Swan, junior and Zeta RA in Lower Quads, originated the idea. “I was planning this event since the beginning of the semester, it was something that I really really wanted to do. It was super fun to network and reach out to people who are involved with the creative parts of campus, to sort of collect and curate pieces of art and writing for the event.”

“Lucy brought this idea up during our RA training to do something that’s open, regardless of what program they’re in, so that they could still be a part of a creative environment,” said Maddie Durkin, junior RA for Creative Edge. “So we just wanted to do something that was open for everybody, which is why we included physical art, music, dance.”

With an evening dress code, a curated gallery and a mocktail mixing bar, the event’s atmosphere was elegant and stylish. Swan emceed the open mic, and Durkin served drinks as participants socialized. The entertainment ranged from a choreographed dance set and guitar solos to profound poetry readings and visual art exhibitions.

“It was a fantastic experience,” said Ceiveon Watkins, junior. “For me, it

was my first opportunity to share my work in public, and I feel that Concordia is such a safe place to do that. It was such a rewarding and fantastic experience and I’m glad that we’re able to put on these kinds of events here. This is something that I would like to see more of.”

“I love this event because it gave people the chance to share many types of art, both visual art and dance,” said Britton Cheney, junior. “I’m a dancer, and I’ve been trying to find a space for dance on this campus. I really appreciated this event because it allowed some of our dance team to showcase a little of what we’ve been working on.”

Along with Dance, Cheney also shared some of her thoughts through poetry, and highlighted the valuable interdisciplinary aspect of the event. “Whether poems, songs or dance, I just think that the arts support each other and build each other up. I think that’s a really great part of this event.”

“I think it worked out great with the timing because this is right before The Aerie submissions go on in December,” said Swan. “By presenting their work to an audience, there’s a social portion of the evening where people can get feedback on pieces, what they liked about the things that they wrote.”

“Tonight was wonderful, it definitely gave a spotlight to all the unheard voices, and allowed all of us to be wowed by each other,” said Brandon Truong, freshman. “Everyone’s so talented. We all had something

to say and a story to tell. I was grateful that tonight was able to exemplify that.”

“Just being around creative people in conversation like this is so valuable,” said Durkin. “We wanted to do something that was inspiring to people, especially around this time of year, when everyone starts to get a bit tired,

just to bring us back to that place of creativity.”

For more information about the Creative Edge LLC, reach out to Maddie Durkin at [maddie.durkin@eagles.cui.edu](mailto:maddie.durkin@eagles.cui.edu). Find the home of creative writing on campus at the Creative Collective, and contact Zoë Litzenberg for further details at [zoe.litzenberg@cui.edu](mailto:zoe.litzenberg@cui.edu).



PICTURED ABOVE: Student Amy Held sings an original song at the event  
Photos courtesy of: Madison Zuniga



PICTURED ABOVE: Students enjoy creative conversation in the Creative Edge lounge  
Photos courtesy of: Madison Zuniga

# Best practices before finals include healthy habits, mental wellness and good places to study on campus

LEYA ALOM  
STAFF WRITER

Finals week is next week, and staying healthy is key to success. From mindful habits to cozy study spots, here's how to thrive during crunch time. Students and staff have plenty of tips for staying on top of their game, whether it's fueling up with the right snacks, managing stress or finding the perfect study space.

Dr. Nathan Meier, professor of Kinesiology, has published research on stress relief methods in university students, and offers valuable insights into staying healthy and productive during finals.

"God made you in His image, so allow yourself to experience a wide range of things each day," said Meier. "Pray, praise, express your emotions, move your body, connect with people, serve others, and experience awe in music, art, nature and people. Being hyper-focused on single aspects of your being can limit feeling whole or 'life to the fullest,' as John records Jesus saying in the Gospel."

Meier encourages students to appreciate the luxury of being able to study. "You are well-educated and have amazing opportunities, more than most people in all of human history. Enjoy this time you have as a student, as it is seldom repeated."

For managing stress, Meier

suggests writing out the work that needs to be done and reverse-engineering solutions over time. "Spend five minutes to plan what needs to be done each day so you stay goal-oriented."

He also noted that stress is a normal response to challenges and can drive action when approached positively. He recommends a mindset that views studying as similar to fitness training: implementing a regular schedule, sets, reps and rest. He advised going beyond recall memory into more active learning, which can be accomplished by explaining concepts aloud, answering questions from memory and creating exam questions.

To stay balanced, there are campus resources like the Writing Center for composition support and tutors for specific subjects. Study groups with motivated peers can also provide structure and encouragement.

For students preparing for finals for the first time, Meier suggests over preparing rather than under preparing. He recommended using the Pomodoro method timers to focus and maintain productivity, keeping a note of distractions to address later, and prioritizing sleep after studying to aid retention.

To use the Pomodoro method, start your study session with a timer set for 25 minutes, and focus on it without interruption. When the

timer goes off, take a five minute break, then repeat.

Carlos Olat, a senior and student athlete on the men's water polo team, recommends starting early and not procrastinating. "Don't leave anything to the last minute," Olat said. He prioritizes eating plenty of veggies to stay energized and getting at least eight hours of sleep every night to keep his mind sharp. When it's time to study, his dorm is his favorite spot to focus.

Senior from New Zealand and track team member Leah Powick prefers studying on the balcony at the BMC, where the fresh air helps her concentrate. The BMC is the perfect study spot, offering a quiet, often empty environment with a beautiful view of the field and a nice breeze. Powick finds physical activity a great way to break up study sessions and stay refreshed. Her advice is to set clear goals for each session and keep a bag of pistachios handy for a healthy study snack.

Anna Tucker, a sophomore also from New Zealand on the track team, said that keeping her phone out of reach is key to staying productive. "I put my phone in time-out," she

said. Tucker believes in the power of physically writing down notes to help with memory and prefers the atmosphere of Eagles' Landing for her study sessions. Her favorite snack? Chocolate licorice bowls as a sweet treat to keep her going.

Alexander Guerrero, a junior, swears by noise-canceling headphones to block out distractions. He recommends studying in the Theta lounge, as it's his favorite place for a quiet environment. Guerrero loves acai bowls as a healthy and refreshing snack, and enjoys listening to music while studying.

With finals approaching, taking care of your body and mind is just as important as hitting the books. Whether it's finding the right spot to study, eating energizing snacks or managing stress through good habits, these student tips are sure to help you succeed.

If you need help or advice please make sure to visit the Tutoring Center and the Writing Studio (located on the second floor of the library), while also speaking to your advisors for advice! The Wellness Center is also available for support with mental and physical health.

## Courier Career Tip of the Issue!

### ASK IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

Asking questions can build knowledge in and around your current position. It also displays a genuine interest toward employers and can create a better understanding of your company as a whole.

Marty the Golden Eagle in:

## HOW THE GRINCH STOLE SEGERSTROM



Photo courtesy of: Dylan Arant



# Spring Events

**January:**

- 10th - What Can I Do With My Major?
- 23rd - Profile Power Up: Master your professional presence

**February:**

- 5th - Brewing Success with Resumes
- 7th - Camp, Ministry & Internship Fair

**March - Life After College Week**

- 3rd - Full-Time Hiring Expo
- 4th - Financial Literacy Workshop
- 5th - Career Closet Pop-Up & Grad School Fair
- 6th - HELP! I need a job! - Job Search Strategies
- 7th - Field of Education Hiring Fair
- 26th - Career Cuisine: Crafting a Savory Resume

**April:**

- 9th - Campus to Career: Your First 90 Days!
- 28th - May 2nd - Senior Walk-in Appointment Week

# Commercial Music ensembles perform their fall concert at Campus JAX

BELLA SAGUM  
STAFF WRITER

Concordia's Commercial Music ensembles showcased their hard work at their fall concert at Campus JAX this semester on Tues., Dec. 3. Commercial Music students have been working diligently to prepare for this concert for months.

Professor Steve Young, Director of Commercial Music and Worship Bands, said that "We've been working on these songs since late August. We don't get a lot of rehearsal time each week so it puts a lot of responsibility on each student to prepare outside of rehearsal time."

Each band had a unique song selection process. Young said, "We try to choose repertoire that represents the best of each genre. We also choose songs that challenge our students in order to help them grow."

Majo Insuasti, a senior Commercial Music major, added that Young looked at the styles of both individual soloists and the sound of the entire band. Insuasti said, "He picked songs that were challenging for us, that could take us out of our comfort zone as vocalists and band, and some songs that we are super comfortable singing and playing. At the end we have a very contrasting set list that helped us grow lots as performers."

Students involved have learned so much throughout this process. Amy Held, a junior Commercial Music major, said, "I've learned that it is a blessing to work with those you love and trust. At the beginning of the semester, there were people in the band who were total strangers to me. Now, we've all bonded over music and can confidently call each other not only bandmates but friends."

Insuasti added that what she enjoyed most about the Campus JAX concert is seeing their growth as a band. "I think we don't really see it until the concert, with all the lights and the eyes on us. It's wonderful to see that we were able to do things that we weren't able to do before," she said.

Students have particular songs that they're most excited to perform. Held said, "Our opener 'Your Smiling Face' by James Taylor is my personal favorite. I pitched it to our director

because I wanted to take a stab at performing a song that I've spent ample time jamming out to in the car. The band has enjoyed playing the arrangement's seamless key changes and supporting the keyboard and saxophone improvisation at the end of the song."

Insuasti is incredibly excited to perform "How Come You Don't Call Me Anymore" by Prince. Insuasti said, "I think it's great because it has lots of energy and tension for a mid-to-slow tempo song. It is the tension of a heart break song in a very cheerful groove, which somehow makes it even better! It is very soulful and simple. I think sometimes simple is very refreshing for the ear, so I hope it is that way for the audience too."

The Commercial Music department has a long history of partnering with Campus JAX. Young said, "Jack Jasper, owner of Campus JAX, used to own a restaurant called Jack Shrimp, which was one of my favorites. I've been enjoying Jack's food for 25 years. When he opened Campus JAX and I heard it was a music venue, we approached him and he welcomed us with open arms. It's been a wonderful partnership."

Young continued, "Not only do we do two concerts per year there, our students participate in their monthly songwriter nights and have been opening acts for many of the headlining artists. There isn't a month that goes by without a Concordia Commercial Music student performing there!"

Insuasti and Held encouraged students to come to their spring Campus JAX concert on April 22. Insuasti said, "We put a whole semester of heart, soul and dedication to this concert. Every detail was thought for the audience and for our growth as artists, so if you are a music lover, familiar or not with contemporary music, I recommend getting in touch with different styles of music and cultures, because they are also made with love and they have a wonderful story of human development behind them."

Held said, "If you haven't been to a Campus JAX concert yet, you're missing out on one of the most exciting events Concordia puts on. You've got to see the musicians in Commercial before they're all famous and charging \$100 per concert ticket!"



PICTURED ABOVE: Commercial 1 ensemble working together to deliver a powerful performance.

Photos courtesy of: Camille Beeson



PICTURED ABOVE: Commercial 2 ensemble captivating the crowd in their beautiful set of songs.

Photos courtesy of: Camille Beeson



PICTURED ABOVE: Vocal Pop ensemble showcasing their incredible harmonies together.

Photos courtesy of: Camille Beeson

# Review: Jon Chu's "Wicked" is a jaw-dropping spectacle

REBEKAH MICHEL  
ARTS AND REVIEWS EDITOR

After over 10 years of development, fans of the hit Broadway show "Wicked" were finally given a film adaptation of the beloved story this Thanksgiving. Deemed as one of the most anticipated films of the year, the 2023 Broadway show that has toured the world is now reimagined in a visual spectacle that reaches a nearly three hour long-run time. Directed by Jon Chu, and featuring pop star Arianna Grande and Tony award winner Cynthia Erivo, "Wicked" makes it clear from the title shot that this is only part one of the critically acclaimed story, with "Wicked: Part 2" expected to be released Thanksgiving of 2025.

When walking into this film, I was hesitant but also increasingly optimistic as I had been subject to the movie's \$350 million marketing budget in every place from Target to Universal Studios. The extent of social media buzz and merchandising that has resulted from this movie, can only be compared as to what many saw with Greta Gerwig's "Barbie" and Taylor Swift's Eras Tour.

I went into this movie hoping for an adaptation that was true to the iconic stage production that I had seen many years ago. From the opening shots, I could tell that the soaring music alongside the stunning cinematography would result in something that felt like a hybrid of a stage musical and an action theme-park ride.

"Wicked" is a stellar example of staying loyal to the original source material, while adding new elements, something that Hollywood has struggled to find a happy medium of for a long time. For fans of the musical "Wicked," the film preserves the iconic musical numbers such as "Popular" and "Defying Gravity." All of the major plot points and subplots of the Broadway show are present in the film as well. However, the film is also full of new "easter eggs" to "The Wizard of Oz" that are not as clear in the stage production.

Based on the book of the same name by Gregory Maguire, "Wicked" tells the story of Elphaba, more commonly known as the Wicked Witch of the West, and Glinda the Good Witch's

unlikely friendship and the conflicts in Oz that occurred before Dorothy's arrival. Jon Chu provides many homages to the original "The Wizard of Oz" through the film's title shot, quick images of Dorothy on the yellow brick road, and Elphaba riding a bicycle with an animal inside, just like evil Miss Gulch does when she takes away Toto. Fans of "The Wizard of Oz" are in for a real treat with "Wicked" as it pays great respect to the film that came before it.

Similarly, fans of the stage production "Wicked" or also in for a marvelous time as there are notable cameo appearances of the actresses who originated the roles of Elphaba and Glinda on Broadway, Idina Menzel and Kristen Chenoweth. There is even a moment in which they get to be with Arianna Grande and Cynthia Erivo, signifying an emotional full circle moment for "Wicked" fans. The film's ability to bring so many plots and nuances together seems almost reminiscent of what Marvel Cinematic Universe has accomplished.

However, the performances given by Grande as Glinda and Erivo as Elphaba are what truly make this film special. Erivo's vocal performance is stellar from beginning to end. Additionally, the character of Elphaba being played by black woman really enhances the musical's message of female friendship and its themes of judgment based on the color of your skin. Grande's performance as Glinda is delightful and comedic. Fans of Grande will be pleased as she stays true to the character of Glinda, while also adding hints of her own personality. Other notable performances were Jonathan Bailey as the charismatic Fiyero and Jeff Goldblum as The Wizard of Oz.

With "Wicked" already breaking box office records as the highest movie based on a Broadway musical, the media frenzy about this film and the release of "Wicked: Part 2" will not be fading away anytime soon. Jon Chu took on the almost impossible task of weaving together two books, a classic movie and a hit Broadway show into a spectacle of a film that will surely leave holiday movie audiences wanting more.

# Christmas on screen: Must-watch holiday movies for Concordia students

ANA GUERRERO RÓDENAS  
STAFF WRITER

Nothing says Christmas like a good movie that envelops us in stories of joy, nostalgia and winter magic. From the infectious laughter of "Home Alone" to the emotional reflections of "Klaus," Christmas movies have a special place in our traditions. But what titles are a must-see for Concordia students?

If we look at the favorite movies of students, we find a mix of beloved classics, romantic comedies and even some surprises that redefine what it means to celebrate Christmas. The Christmas classics that lead among Concordia students are "A Christmas Story" and "Home Alone," films that we have all seen at some point. The first tells the story of a child in the 1940s who tries to convince his parents, teacher and Santa Claus that a Red Ryder rifle is the best gift for Christmas, "It is hilarious, is very quotable and just comical," Kelsey Ballard said.

Other people like Marcus Morgan and Malachi Ebanks prefer "Home Alone," both 1 and 2, "It is great, it is funny... it is a classic," Ebanks said. It is a fun and family-friendly movie, which tells the adventures and pranks of little Kevin during Christmas.

However, if we move to the romantic comedy category, "Love Actually" would be at the top. This movie is set in London and tells the story of four different people and how their paths cross. It makes you laugh and tells you some bittersweet situations, which if you are a little sensitive, will surely make you shed a tear. "Love Actually" is a movie that shows

different situations and can reflect on everyone," Aislinn McGahan said.

"Arthur Christmas" is an animated film released in 2011 that tells the story of how Santa Claus's gifts are delivered in a single night. The film mixes several ingredients that are needed in Christmas movies, a disorganized family and an unexpected hero, who in this case turns out to be Arthur, Santa Claus's youngest son. This film shows that new movies have also gained a place in the traditions of some students like McGahan, "I love cartoon Christmas movies. 'Arthur Christmas' is my favorite newer one because it is nostalgic, funny and makes me think of the future," she said.

It is interesting to see how families get together during Christmas to do something as simple as watching a movie every year. Movies like "Home Alone" or "A Christmas Story" evoke childhood and family, central themes in the Christmas festivities. Even modern movies, like "Arthur Christmas," emphasize values like unity and teamwork, resonating with the students at Concordia.

What is clear is that Christmas movies are not just stories on a screen. They are rituals that connect us to our roots and our loved ones. From the laughs of "Home Alone" to the sweetness of "Love Actually," they all have one thing in common: the ability to unite us and remind us that, beyond gifts and lights, Christmas is about sharing moments with those we love most. So, which movie will you watch this year?

# Swim & Dive is on the hunt

EVA PREWITT  
SPORTS EDITOR

Concordia swim & dive marked the midpoint of their season as they wrapped up three days of competition on Nov. 22, 23 and 24 at the La Verne Winter Invitational. Bringing plenty of stellar finishes to the nest, the Golden Eagles returned with third place finishes out of 16 schools on the women's side and 13 schools on the men's side. The Concordia squad recorded 51 personal bests and 33 All-Time Top-10 finishes in the three day competition alone.

Junior Aubrie Carver helped the Golden Eagles toward success in the record books, setting new all-time records in the 200 freestyle and 400 medley relays. "In each of the events, we have strong returners and some fiery newcomers and I think we all push each other to become the best we can be individually, which helps us become stronger as a team," said Carver.

Other notable performances over the weekend on the women's side came from Alice Stainer who clutched a sweeping win in the console final of the 200 free. Her 1:52.87 finish earned her not only a personal best, but an NCAA DII 'B' qualifying time.

In the men's races, graduate student Hunter May was a stand out athlete, breaking a five year personal best in the 200 individual medley, recording a 1:52.82 to hold the 9th all-time in the record books.

Freshman stud Jackson Rosol swam alongside May in the 200 IM barely trailing behind by 2/100ths of a second finishing at 1:52.80. Rosol said, "I hope to get on the podium in two or three events at conference and put up some more top times for the school."

After welcoming a brigade of freshmen this season, this new crew has made their mark on the team. "One thing that stuck out to me in the first half of the season is how well the new freshman class meshed with the team. They are hard working individuals and could possibly be the missing piece to the puzzle that could give

us a chance at winning conference again. I really enjoy the energy they bring to practice everyday," said May.

Jack Harris is another graduate student who after his last three years at Concordia, has been a crucial leader for the team in and out of the pool. Harris said, "This year, the group is the most cohesive I've seen during my time in the program. The energy and personality that the younger guys bring have rejuvenated the more experienced bunch."

With Christmas break peeking around the corner, swim & dive will assure they are well prepared when their season picks back up in January as they fight toward the PCSC Conference Championship in February. "Over the break, we will stay on campus an extra week and a half for winter training. We have doubles every day, and the sets we do are some of the hardest we do all year. It is always a really mentally and physically challenging time, but it helps us get better for Conference in February," said Carver.

The Golden Eagles are looking to hunt and return to the nest in January better than ever. "The team will continue to focus on staying hungry and unsatisfied with our success at La Verne. We had a great showing as a group, but our end goal is the PCSC Conference Championship in February. If we want success at conference, we must endure some discomfort in training over the next few weeks," said Harris.

Swim & dive is competing at home tomorrow, Dec. 7, at the William Woollett Jr. Aquatics Center for the Pledge Plunge at 1 p.m. The Golden Eagles will then push through winter training and return to regular season competition in January with their sights set on the PCSC Championship.



PICTURED ABOVE: Head Coach, Bert Bergen, praying for the team  
Photo courtesy of: Crash Kamon



PICTURED ABOVE: Camryn Kiernan Action Shot  
Photo courtesy of: Golden Eagle Dropbox

## Women's basketball heads into conference

SOFIA DOMINGUEZ  
STAFF WRITER

Concordia women's basketball is currently 1-6 as they head into conference play. Having graduated a large senior class last season, this season the team is focused on stepping into leadership roles and playing a faster-paced game.

"I think fans can expect to see a faster, transition-dominant team. We emphasized a faster playing style in the pre-season. I think many people have come out of their shells and stepped into roles they needed to step into," said sophomore Izzy Navarro from Tijuana, Mexico.

As the season's first conference game creeps up, the team is dialed in on playing the best they can to be seeded as high as possible. Navarro added, "Our main goal is obviously to get a conference championship and make a run in the tournament, but we also really want to make it a great last year for all our seniors."

In the first game of the season, women's basketball coach Christine Collins-Kiernan achieved a career milestone with her 100th win. Camryn Kiernan, a graduate student from Orange and the daughter of coach Collins-Kiernan said, "Being the coach's daughter, I am super proud of her achieving 100 wins! I have seen firsthand all of the work she pours into our team, and I have had the best

time playing for her."

Having graduated many players, this season the team has a lot of young athletes who are being shown the ropes by established players. "We have a lot of new players playing in different roles and positions of importance. They are getting on-the-job training every day and growing in those skills. These immediate opportunities are pushing their experience and every day you can see them getting more comfortable with the pressure, job responsibilities and accountability to growing up fast," said Collins-Kiernan.

With more younger players comes an abundance of responsibility. Kiernan added, "There are differences between last year's team and this year's. We have a young team this year, as many girls graduated. This has allowed players to step into new leadership roles as we try to guide this young team. I have had to take a different role on this team and make changes to my game as well. Being a graduate student, I had to step into more of a leadership role and be that supportive voice for the younger players."

The Golden Eagles took on Biola in La Mirada on Dec. 4 to open conference play. The home conference opener is Dec. 11 versus Azusa Pacific.



PICTURED ABOVE: CUI WBB 24-25 Team  
Photo courtesy of: Golden Eagle Dropbox



PICTURED ABOVE: Izzy Navarro Media Day  
Photo courtesy of: Golden Eagle Dropbox

# CUI women's volleyball senior night

JADEN HENDERSON  
STAFF WRITER

Emotions were running high as the Concordia women's volleyball team came together to celebrate Senior Night, not only because it was a significant event but also because it was the last outing for the squad's favorite seniors, Kawehi Chang and Kennedy Farley.

Playing for Concordia has been a memorable experience for sophomore Kayden Croy, especially with her closest friends by her side. "It means a lot," said Croy when asked what it meant to be a Golden Eagle. "Concordia is a special place, so I'm really grateful to represent our school every time I play. Getting to play alongside my best friends makes it even better."

Families gathered in the stands to cheer on their athletes, and the enthusiasm of Senior Night was evident. With the special vibe in the gym, Croy said, "The environment was great. It's always so exciting to see people in the stands and know how much support we have. We all love to make our families proud."

However, for Croy, the most emotional part of the night was celebrating her seniors, particularly Chang, who she has come to see as both a teammate and a mentor.

"My emotions were high leading up to Senior Night," she said. "It's bittersweet because we, as the younger girls, are so proud of Kawehi, but we know how much she'll be missed. We got her gifts and decorated the locker room to show our appreciation."

When asked how it felt to see her senior move on, Croy's tone in her voice began to lower. "It's so sad," she said. "We are so proud of her, and I'm grateful for every moment I've shared with her. It's definitely going to be strange without her next season."

Senior Night was the culmination of four years of growth, difficulties and innumerable memories for Chang. The

senior from Oahu, Hawaii, thought about what it meant to play for the school after her adventure at Concordia, which has been a combination of success and tenacity. "To me, playing for the school wasn't just about competing as an athlete," said Chang. "It was about representing the community and school, and giving thanks to everyone who has supported me along the way, coaches, family and friends."

Chang admitted that getting ready for Senior Night was an emotional experience. "As a senior, it didn't feel real that my athletic career would come to an end on this day," she said. "The team decorated the locker room and gym, and they even gave a gift basket to each senior. It made the night even more special, as I could feel the love and support from everyone."

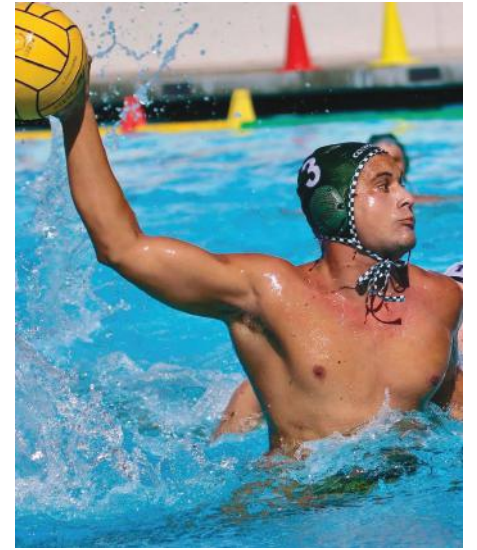
Having her family in the crowd added an extra layer of meaning to her on the last game as a Golden Eagle. "Having my family in the crowd made the night even more emotional. To have my biggest supporters there for such a big milestone in my life was so special," said Chang, with gratitude.

"My family walked with me, my parents, little brother, my grandparents, aunt, and uncle," Chang continued. "They've been there every step of my journey, and having them there as I celebrated this milestone was a reminder of how important they've been to my experience. I'm forever grateful for them."

This evening served as a celebration of all that the two seniors, Chang and Farley, had achieved. A reminder of the friendships and personal development they had acquired in addition to their victories.



PICTURED ABOVE: Oscar Garcia Blomback  
Action Shot  
Photo courtesy of: CUI Men's Water Polo



PICTURED ABOVE: Kosas Action Shot  
Photo courtesy of: CUI Men's Water Polo

## Men's water polo season comes to a close

SOFIA DOMINGUEZ  
STAFF WRITER

The men's water polo season has come to a close, ending with a 14-17 record and finishing second place in the WWPA conference. Although it was not the ending the men hoped for, they had an incredible season and kept their heads high with the help of their leadership.

Graduate assistant coach, Carlee Kapana, from Newport Beach said, "Like any collegiate sport, season is such a grind. As a coach, I would advise them to find a way to have fun while still working hard. Do whatever it takes to have a little fun during such a difficult time."

Having earned the number one spot in the west region of their conference, the Golden Eagles were immediately placed in the semi-final game, where they defeated Gannon University 14-9.

A senior from Mexico City, Carlos Olat said, "One of my favorite moments from this past season was playing against Pepperdine and having a close game against the No.4 team in the nation at the time. Seeing the excitement from the guys and realizing the hard work that it took to achieve such great things was one of my best experiences with the team."

The connection between this 2024 team was undeniable throughout the entire season. Coach Kapana said, "My favorite moment was when we played some of our best water polo against Biola. There were complications with the clocks, which delayed our game, but that adversity did not stop the guys from playing well. We ended going up 9-1 in the first half, and it was an awesome game to watch."

Oscar Garcia Blomback, a junior from Uppsala, Sweden, said, "I tried to lead the team by showing consistency. Showing up every day with a good attitude

and pushing every practice to become better as an individual and ultimately be an asset to the team."

This season, men's water polo welcomed a stellar Golden Eagle to the team, who earned WWPA Co-Player of the Year. Konstantinos Koulouris, a graduate student from Thessaloniki, Greece, said, "Everything I've accomplished in my athletic career is thanks to the support I've received from others. My coaches, especially this year, were incredibly supportive. They treated me with great care and respect, and I am deeply grateful for their dedication day in and day out. From the start of my journey, my mentality has always been rooted in relentless practice. Being a smaller athlete, I've always had to work harder than everyone else to achieve my goals."

Not only did Koulouris earn Co-Player of the Year, but he also earned a spot on the All-Conference First Team and All-Defensive Team. Standing alongside Koulouris were his fellow teammates, Harry Bentham and Griffin Beth. The Golden Eagles continued to rack up All-Conference honors, with Jacob Stuart making All-Conference Second-Team, Sam Diamond receiving an Honorable Mention, and Lucas Rodriguez earning a spot on the All-Freshman squad.

"My favorite moment this season was the practice we had after our first win against Biola. While games and wins are what most people focus on, the real value comes from the time my teammates and I spend together. Wins are great, but they don't compare to the joy and laughter we shared during practices. I loved watching this team compete, it was an incredible experience and an unforgettable feeling. What I'll miss the most is simply playing alongside them," said Koulouris.



PICTURED ABOVE: (Top) Concordia women's volleyball team with seniors, Kennedy Farley and Kawehi Chang with holding framed jerseys  
(Bottom) Kawehi Chang with her family members  
Photo courtesy of: Crash Kamon

# Golden Eagles soar worldwide

CALEB JEBB FOX  
STAFF WRITER

From England to Rome to Austria, the 2024 fall semester yielded many travel stories and adventures from students who participated in some of the study abroad programs offered at Concordia. Students currently studying abroad gave advice and excerpts from travel stories for Golden Eagles who want to fill their future study abroad semester with as much travel as possible.

Starting with Concordia Cambridge experience program, Hudson Winchel, sophomore, shared his list of adventures: "I've been to England, where I'm studying, Scotland, Italy, France, and, if it counts, the Vatican. We're also tentatively planning trips to Ireland and Amsterdam." With only two months of international experience, Winchel has already visited four countries, with two more adding themselves in his last month abroad.

While Winchel's total is impressive, sophomore Josiah Thieme tops it, having visited thirteen countries in three months of being abroad through Concordia's Living and Learning program. Thieme's study abroad adventure began in

Rome but extends to Malta, Vatican City, Egypt, Spain, England, Greece, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Austria. He said, "It's been a lot of fun setting out and seeing the world." However, out of all his ever-growing list of trips, Thieme points back to one moment as his favorite, which was "waking up and going to the balcony in my hotel first thing in the morning and watching the sunrise."

Other favorite moments for Winchel include, "After a day trip to London to see Les Misérables in the West End, a group of us had to sprint through the underground to catch our return train; walking through the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, Scotland, for the first time; and entering St. Peter's Basilica in Rome."

Faith Taylor, junior, part of Concordia Cambridge experience, explained, "The best part about traveling is making memories that I'll have forever. I am so grateful I got to have this once-in-a-lifetime experience with so many good friends. I know I'm going to be reminiscing about this forever."

As much fun as traveling is while studying abroad, Thieme cautioned to remember that while being abroad, you are a student as well. On his trips, Thieme would often "find a coffee shop and a good view" to take care of his schoolwork while simultaneously enjoying the beauty of travel. Winchel offered similar advice: "The earlier you go, the less academic workload you'll have, making it the perfect time to explore."

No matter the different experiences these Golden Eagles had overseas, they all point towards the excitement and, as Winchel explains, the "academic knowledge" that is interconnected with international travel. To explore Concordia's different study abroad opportunities, visit [cui.edu/academicprograms/programs-abroad/partner-programs-abroad/europe](http://cui.edu/academicprograms/programs-abroad/partner-programs-abroad/europe) and start thinking about your travel plans today.



PICTURED ABOVE: Josiah Thieme in Egypt  
Photo courtesy of: Josiah Thieme



PICTURED ABOVE: Concordia Cambridge students while travelling  
Photo courtesy of: Jebb Fox

# Check out these Christmas activities close to campus

SAVANNAH SMITH  
STAFF WRITER

During the holidays it can be difficult to find events and activities that are affordable, nearby and fun. Thankfully, there are several festive opportunities close to campus that Concordia students recommend.

First, the historic holiday boat parade in Newport Beach is a great way to spark the Christmas spirit. This free event is hosted at Newport Harbor, a twenty minute drive from campus, and will run from Dec. 18-22 from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. For over a hundred years, local boat owners have draped their boats with lights to celebrate Christmas. Bring some friends, blankets, and hot chocolate to enjoy the show!

"My favorite thing to do during the holiday season is to see the holiday boat parade," said Lexi Miner, junior, who grew up living in Newport Beach. Her advice was to go to the Lighthouse Cafe ([lighthousebn.com](http://lighthousebn.com)) on Balboa Peninsula to enjoy dinner while watching the parade.

Another great way to see cool local lights is by taking a walk or drive through the Woodbury neighborhood in Irvine. These expertly decorated houses have a reputation for the most impressive holiday light displays. You can find Woodbury off Jeffrey Rd. and Bryan Ave. Take a drive with station 103.5 on the radio playing holiday music and check out some lights!

Another hidden gem during the

Christmas season is Santa's Railroad Village in Irvine ([irvineparkrailroad.com/events/santas-village](http://irvineparkrailroad.com/events/santas-village)). Stop by anytime between Nov. 24 and Dec. 30 to buy treats and look at unique train cars or vintage trolleys that are only showcased during the holidays. You can also view the historical museums and exhibits that they have to offer while drinking spiced cider and eating some homemade tamales, seasonal pastries. Admission is free to enjoy all of the games, photo booths, cookie and ornament decorations, and other activities!

If you want a more relaxed night outside of campus, the Noguchi Garden in Costa Mesa is an often overlooked peaceful sculpture garden that is a quiet spot for reflection amidst the holiday busyness. It's also known as the "California Scenario" because the garden is a symbolic representation of California's diverse landscapes and ecosystems. Where each element in the garden represents a unique aspect of the state's natural environment, agricultural heritage, and industrial history. Walking through the gardens is a great way to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next!

Life can get very busy during the holidays, so make sure that you also prioritize mental health in the midst of all the chaos. Take advantage of these close Christmas activities to take a break from the stress of finals! Concordia is located in a beautiful location, and students are encouraged to explore and interact with their environment and to get involved in the community off and on campus.

# Concordia professors provide post-election insights

LINDA MARCELO  
STAFF WRITER

In the wake of the November general election, students are considering the future of the nation, and what they can expect from the incoming administration. It is crucial for young voters to process their feelings and be knowledgeable about discussions concerning the current political climate.

Dr. Sean Bortz, an Associate's Professor of History, stressed the importance of intellectual maturity and, above all, moral character, when evaluating the outcome and candidates. He said, "I think students should strive to be intellectually mature, and we are all responsible for who we allow to influence us; we should allow wisdom, wise people, to influence us." This calls for students to be alert in order to navigate different information and perspectives in the media.

Bortz also highlighted that the pursuit of truth in politics is not just about uncovering facts, but particularly about understanding the moral character of candidates. "Do these candidates possess a moral character?" he said. "A true virtuous person sees beyond their loyalty to either political party."

The recent election has revealed how polarized a political landscape

can be, and Bortz warns about maintaining blind loyalty to any political party. He encourages students to prioritize truth; an angle that is essential for students to maintain a more open mind when trying to understand political issues and candidates.

A conversation with Dr. Bryan Santin, Associate Professor of English, revealed insights into voter behavior and recent population trends that have emerged. He mentioned that although the overall turnout was slightly down compared to the 2020 election, voters appeared to be "reacting to key economic factors."

Santin pointed out that the winning candidate will face significant hurdles in unifying a divided electorate. He said, "A general sense of instability, anger and fear will make it very difficult to unify the electorate."

Looking ahead, Santin noted, "The legislative agenda will be fully controlled by the Republican Party." This indicates a significant shift in policy direction which could result in changes such as tax cuts and increased immigration control.

Overall as students reflect on the recent election, both professors encouraged students to engage in informed dialogue, seek out diverse perspectives, and prioritize respect, truth and moral character in political discussions.