Daily

LIFE

HARMONIES AND HALLOWEEN

UConn A Cappella puts on spooky spectacular



The University of Connecticut A Capella groups holds their annual SpooKapella Concert in Storrs Congregational Church on Friday. The night featured all 10 of UConn's A Capella groups in their spooky attire.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JACOB BLACKWELL, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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The University of Connecticut's A Cappella groups showed out at its annual Spookapella performance at the Storrs Congregational Church Friday night. The church was filled as the performance included all 10 of UConn's A cappella groups and featured creative costumes and complex performances.

This concert was the first of the semester to feature the groups' "newbs" (new members) and was an exciting time for them to preview the rest of the year.

Husky Hungama, UConn's South Asian fusion a cappella group, is co-ed and performs in five-part harmony with vocal percussion. This semester, the group welcomed four new members: three freshmen and one senior. The additions filled a specific need, since two are sopranos, one is a tenor and one is a bass, a part the group was short on.

"We're so happy to have them, and they're all so talented," said Musical Director Ilakiya Prabhu, a third-semester molecular and biology student. "We really needed basses, so that was great. They added to our sound in such a positive way, making it more resonant and more full. They have such good chemistry with the group, and we're such a good family."

The group showed off both its range and its sense of community in a two-part set. Its first number blended "Beauty and a Beat" by Justin Bieber with "Sooraj Dooba Hai," a popular Hindi song by Arijit Singh. The performance closed with "Emperor's New Clothes" by Panic! at the Disco.

The group was also dressed to the nines in spooky attire, and the audience loved trying to guess what each person's costume was.

The Rolling Tones also brought a fun set of costumes as every member was dressed as a character from "Minecraft." "We are singing 'Hit Me Baby One More Time' by Tenacious D, so not the Britney Spears version, but the Jack Black version, so I tried to bring that energy. And then we are singing 'I Know the End' by Phoebe Bridgers. We are all dressed up as Minecraft characters, so for 'I Know the End,' there might be a funny little bit in there. I'll tease that for the audience," said Rolling Tones President Emily Goodman, a seventh-semester allied health sciences major.

From the "Minecraft" theme to the energy of their set, the performance showed just how bonded the group is, and Goodman said this bond is a big part of what is coming for the rest of the semester.

"We're going to be doing some gigs here and there, especially when it comes to the holiday season," Goodman said. "We're going to go to some nursing homes and sing some holiday songs, and also songs that are requests for them. I'm really excited to give back to the community."

Looking ahead to next semester, the group plans to record an album, which Goodman hopes to release sometime next year. "We're very excited to be recording and releasing that," she said. The group also has plenty of bonding planned, including a 24-hour stay at McDonald's together, a retreat next semester and a group trip.

Another standout in the costume lineup was A Completely Different Note, whose members took the stage as "SpongeBob" characters, adding even more color to an already imaginative night.

By the end of the evening, it was clear that Spookapella was more than Halloween fun. Between the packed audience, the new members stepping into the spotlight for the first time, and costumes ranging from Minecraft to Bikini Bottom, the night showed the creativity, humor and community that define UConn's A cappella groups. If this concert was any preview, the rest of the year is going to sound amazing.

HONORS 4 DIVERSITY CELEBRATES BLACK POETRY DAY

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The University of Connecticut's Honors 4 Diversity organization hosted a celebration for Black Poetry Day on Thursday at McHugh Hall.

Danielle Dei, a seventh-semester accounting student and the president of H4D, led the event. She said Black Poetry Day falls on Oct. 17 and is not a federally recognized holiday, but the celebration event happened on Thursday, Oct. 22 because it aligned with H4D's biweekly meeting schedule.

"It's important to know that Black Poetry Day is not a federally recognized holiday," Dei said. "But it brings more importance to why we should celebrate it because there is actually a World Poetry Day. But Black poetry is not recognized, and we must question why."

Dei began by explaining the significance of Oct. 17. She said it was the birthday of Jupiter Hammon in 1711, an enslaved man who is credited as the first African American poet to publish a piece of work in the U.S. His poem, "An Evening Thought," was printed in Hartford in 1761.

The background was followed by an overview of oral storytelling and poetry. Dei connected this tradition of oral storytelling with her Ghanaian lineage, as her father and forefathers talked through cultural history.

"Poetry is a living language," Dei said. "It's not very stagnant or myopic; it's very broad. There's not one genre or single story that contains poetry; it's many overlapping movements and languages."

Dei spotlighted the most notable literary movements that were driven by or included Black poetry. She touched on abolitionist literature and the cultural boom of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Soon after was the Négritude movement, which emerged from Francophone intellectual groups in the 1930s. She ended with the Black Arts movement of the 1960s, where she said poetry became a "political force."

After the history highlights, Ariyana Stitchell, a seventh-semester psychology student, read her poem "Everywhere." She said it was her first time reading her poetry to an audience.

"I was kind of nervous to do it, but I still did it anyway, so I was happy I did it," Stitchell said.

Stitchell said she has been writing poetry in her free time for a few years, and she wrote the poem she read in 2025.

"The poem is about the common experience of regretting past decisions you might've made or who you might've been in the past," Stitchell said. "And it's about reconciling with that version of yourself and understanding that you needed to be that version of yourself to become who you are now."

Stitchell's reading was followed by a presentation of poems by African American poets. Dei read Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," which was published in 1921. Videos of Maya Angelou reading her poem "And Still I Rise" and Amanda Gorman reading her poem "The Hill We Climb" at President Joe Biden's inauguration were shown afterward.

The presentation concluded with a performance piece by Guy Kelton Jones at "America's Got Talent," which blended spoken word poetic devices and music.

Dei then shared a writing exercise for attendees to experiment with so they could write their own poem.

After the event, Mya Matta-Paskell, a fifth-semester nursing student and vice president of H4D, said she wanted the celebration to be collaborative for students.

"Just overall, giving a space to other people so we can also have other peers come celebrate and bring up each other," Paskell said.

Dei said she wanted the event to bring Black students on campus together.

"I feel like we're just spread out everywhere," Dei said. "There's not really a space where everyone can just come be creative and not feel awkward about it, and be like, 'they're a nerd, they like poetry,' I don't want that. We want to cultivate that space."

Dei emphasized that while the celebration focused on Black poetry, she wanted people of all backgrounds to feel welcome.

"I wanted it to be open to everyone, and everyone, anyone was here, and I really enjoyed that," Dei said. "If there are events that are marketed toward Black people or focus on Black people, that doesn't mean you're not included in that. Don't ever feel afraid to go to such events; you should be encouraged to go because that's how you learn."



UConn Honors for Diversity (H4D) Executive Board presenter interacts with a student upon a personal story they want to share on Thursday. Students were encouraged to interact and speak to one another about "A voice I carry..." or "A place remembers...."

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