ARTS

"Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun's rays do not burn until brought to a focus."
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL SCOTTISH INVENTOR

What to know about rushing a cappella at Yale

BY SIMRAN RANDHAWA
STAFF REPORTER

As the fall semester commences, Yale's 14 undergraduate a cappella groups will open their doors to first years and sophomores in an annual two-week process of concerts, auditions, callbacks, meals and — most excitingly — tap night.

The Singing Group Council, or SGC, which oversees all a cappella tryout processes, will host an informational session for rushees Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in Linsly Chittenden Hall.

Yale is home to 14 non-senior a cappella groups, each differentiated by musical style, singing range and history. They consist of the Alley Cats, Cadence, Doox of Yale, Living Water, Mixed Company, The New Blue, Out of the Blue, Pitches and Tones, Proof of the Pudding, Redhot and Blue, Shades, The SOBs, Something Extra and Spizzwinks(?).

If a rushee doesn't know which one to join, they can hear every group sing at two concerts hosted during the first week of classes, which normally include performances from each a cappella group before their rush process begins.

The process officially begins with Woolsey Jam on Friday at 8:30 p.m. in Woolsey Hall, which traditionally features one song from every group.

Marsh Jam, which will take place next Monday at 7:30 p.m. in Marsh Lecture Hall, will feature each group performing two songs. Students will be able to sign up for auditions immediately following the concert.

The 14 undergraduate groups participating in the SGC rush process are divided by the voice parts they sing. SATB groups sing soprano, alto, tenor and bass parts. SSAA groups sing soprano and alto parts. TTBB groups sing tenor, baritone and bass parts.

Information for each group can be found on each group's website as well as rushyale.com. Once students have a sense for what each group has to offer, they can begin rehearsing for auditions.



ZOE BERG / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Yale's two-week a cappella rush process officially kicks off this Friday with Woosley Jam, where groups will sing for prospective new members. Here is a breakdown of auditions, callbacks, pre-taps and everything else rushees need to know going into the

Tryout time

Auditions will begin after Marsh Jam on Sept. 9 and continue through Sept. 13. Individual groups will communicate with rushees on when and where to audition and what materials to prepare.

Students should not approach this process by trying to determine which groups are the most prestigious, said Dayne Bolding '27. Bolding, a member of the council overseeing a cappella, said that one of the biggest mistakes rushees make is "not prioritizing themselves and what they want in the group."

Bolding, who was previously a member of Doox of Yale, said that, if selected, students will be spending a lot of time with their fellow group members. Rushees should base their decisions on "their own judgment and not what other people say about the perception of the group," he said.

According to the SGC handbook, an audition should not last longer than 15 minutes.

"Everything inside the room up to that point — what happens in those 15 minutes — is up to the groups themselves," Abril Tello Cornejo '27, an SGC member formerly in Spizzwinks(?), said.

Hannah Shinder '29, a member of Out of the Blue, said most groups test rushees on several different musical styles. Having rushed six different a cappella groups her first year, she recalled singing vocal warm-ups used to determine a singer's range, pitch matching, singing in a quartet to test blending and performing a solo.

"We listen for a bunch of things during auditions," Shinder said. "Most groups have auditions that test a range of musical skills to see rushees' musical assets."

Rushees should generally come prepared with a short solo of their choice that is around a minute long. They will also be assigned pieces and songs from the group's repertoire.

Ayannah Obas '27, an SGC member, said having previous singing experience is not "super important."

"There's a wide variety of backgrounds in my a cappella group," Obas, who was formerly in Mixed Company, said.

Obas said she had no singing experience before coming to Yale — "to this day, I still can't read sheet music," she said.

The number of openings for particular voice parts varies between different groups and from year to year, Cornejo and Obas said.

Callbacks

On Sept. 14, groups will notify rushees whether they have been invited to callbacks.

Then through Sept. 18, groups can invite rushees to rush meals and walks. These informal ways of getting to know prospective members give rushees an opportunity to determine which group they are the best cultural and social fit for.

Callbacks will take place during the weekend of Sept. 19 and Sept. 20 and each audition lasts no longer than 30 minutes. Groups may ask rushees to prepare additional music beforehand.

The time required for preparation can add up. Cornejo said rushees may have to learn new music and prepare another song in the roughly week-long period between auditions and callbacks.

"You want to make sure that you're dedicating enough time to all of them," she said.

The tap process

Groups can begin extending pre-taps, or official offers to join a cappella groups, from Sept. 21 through Sept. 23.

Rushees can accept, decline or take time to consider a pre-tap. During those three days, groups can continue holding meals and walks with rushees.

Rush culminates on Sept. 23 in the form of tap night, when students who do not receive a pre-tap may still receive a regular tap. As rushees accept their taps, current members of each group prepare for a night of festivities to induct the new members through initiation traditions.

For students who rush but do not ultimately join a group, Bolding stressed that a cappella is only one corner of Yale's performing arts community.

"I think the biggest misconception is that it determines your success in the arts at Yale," Bolding said. "So many people will rush a cappella and really hyper-focus on it during September. But there are so many other ways to be able to do art at Yale."

The SGC's rushee information session will take place in LC 102.

Contact **SIMRAN RANDHAWA** *at simran.randhawa@yale.edu.*

These classics professors did not mind the modernity in Nolan's Odyssey

BY ALEX GELDZAHLER
STAFF REPORTER

The domestic release of "The Odyssey" over the summer attracted millions of moviegoers across the world — including some of Yale's classics professors.

The movie, directed by Christopher Nolan, adapts Homer's "Odyssey," following the journey of the hero Odysseus as he returns home from the Trojan War. While professors interviewed by the News said the film was far from a complete reflection of the nearly 3,000-year-old poem, they said it transposed a nuanced understanding of the original work to the medium of a modern movie.

"Of course I have questions, or I wonder, why did they do it this way? But as a whole, I think it's a coherent understanding of the poem," Egbert Bakker, a classics professor who specializes in Homeric studies, said.

Just under three hours, Nolan's film attempts to condense the roughly 12,000-line epic into a movie for global audiences. The story itself, an enduring tale which remained popular throughout antiquity and into the modern age, mixes teleological stories from the ancient world with the mythological lore of ancient Greece. Extended IMAX screenings will run until Sept. 16.

"As someone who knows Homer well, I couldn't help watching the movie in the second degree, comparing whatever I saw with what is (or is not) in Homer. There is no comparison with reading Homer (which I do in the original), because the poem's formulaic language leaves much to the imagination that movies readily supply visually," Bakker wrote in a statement prior to an interview.

Nolan preserved certain aspects of the original story while leaving others out. Such choices have generated discussion in the academic community, notably from Emily Wilson GRD '01, who published two modern translations of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." Wilson, whose translation was used in the film, published a critical review in the London Review of Books, highlighting many of the academic disputes over Nolan's adaptation.

James Uden, a classics professor at Yale, said that he's aware of the criticism of choices Nolan made in his adaptation of the text.

"I think his movie should be judged against other movies, not against the original poem. Of course, the Odyssey contains countless nuances and plot points you can't squeeze into a three-hour movie. That's why we should read the original!" Uden wrote in an email to the News. "But omitting parts of the poem doesn't make the film itself bad: it's just different."

Various parts of the film have drawn significant criticism, some of which the interviewed professors echoed. One such part is the famous scene with the cyclops Polyphemus, whom Odysseus and his crew encounter early in their journey homeward.

Compared with the original text, Nolan's version simplifies the exchange between Odysseus and Polyphemus, omitting a pun where Odysseus replies, "nobody," to the cyclops when asked what his name is.

"In this version, Odysseus is more of a soul-searching hero, rather than the cunning, clever trickster of words," Milette Gaifman, a classics professor and the chair of the History of Art Department, said.

Gaifman's observation about the poem and film points to a larger difference between the two, a conflict touched on by both the Yale Classics Department and Wilson's critique: the characterization of Odysseus, played by Matt Damon.

A key moment in the film comes near its conclusion, as Odysseus reveals his guilt for his trickery in the war, infiltrating Troy using a wooden horse, as well as the fallout from the bloody sack of the city — a major departure from the original text.

"The ancients did not have, of course, concepts like PTSD, but I think it is legitimate to depict warriors in those modern terms," Bakker wrote.

Uden and Bakker ultimately emphasized the need to read and devote time to the original text itself, either in translation or in the original.

They also highlighted the positive attention the film has drawn to classics.

"It's fantastic exposure for our field. If anyone has seen the film and wants to explore further, we Classics profs are all ready to help you dig deeper into this world," Uden wrote.

Yale's Classics Department is located in Phelps Hall at 344 College St.

Contact **ALEX GELDZAHLER** *at alex.geldzahler@yale.edu.*


ABBY ASSOUAD / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Since its July release, Christopher Nolan's "The Odyssey" has sparked debate about its fidelity to the original poem. Members of Yale's Classics Department said the film reflects a nuanced, modern understanding of the nearly 3,000-year-old epic.