



# **Vanderbilt Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium & Arts Showcase**



**APRIL 13, 2023**



**VANDERBILT**  
Writing Studio



**VANDERBILT**  
Office of Experiential Learning  
and Immersion Vanderbilt

WELCOME



## **Welcome to the Spring 2023 Vanderbilt Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium and Arts Showcase!**

The symposium and showcase are a partnership between the Vanderbilt Writing Studio and the Office of Experiential Learning and Immersion Vanderbilt. This event celebrates the creative endeavors of undergraduate students across the university.

This event is open to all undergraduate students who wish to showcase the creative works they have completed during their time at Vanderbilt and share more about their creative process.

The Spring 2023 Vanderbilt Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium and Arts Showcase will be held on Thursday, April 13, in Alumni Hall from 3 to 6 p.m. CT. Virtual galleries of student works will also be viewable at the following links:

### **Art Showcase Submissions**

**<https://eliv22-23.myportfolio.com/vuas>**

### **Creative Writing Symposium Submissions**

**[UCWS2023.myportfolio.com](https://ucws2023.myportfolio.com)**

**(password: ucws2023)**



## AGENDA

**When:** Thursday, April 13, 3-6 p.m. CT

**Where:** Alumni Hall, 2nd Floor

**3-3:15**.....Welcome from the  
Writing Studio and EL&IV

**3:15-4:10**.....Spotlight Panel

**4:15-4:50**.....Session 1

**4:55-5:05**...Remarks from VP Sharpley-Whiting

**5:05-6**.....Session 2

**3-6**.....Arts Showcase (*Memorial Room*)

**6**.....Closing Remarks

## PANELS

### **SPOTLIGHT PANEL (3:15-4:10)**

#### ***Room 206***

**Panelists:** Lola Daley (poetry), Lily York (nonfiction), Farouk Ramzan (fiction)

**Panel Chair:** John Bradley, Writing Studio

### **SESSION 1 (4:15-4:50)**

#### ***Room 100***

**Panel A (Nonfiction) Panelists:** Matthew Celecia, Hunter Graves

**Panel Chair:** Paige Oliver, English

#### ***Room 206***

**Panel B (Poetry) Panelists:** Ilana Drake, Qwynn Foster, Christabel Hammond, Sidney Vafaie-Partin

**Panel Chair:** Caroline Stevens, English

### **SESSION 2 (5:05-6)**

#### ***Room 206***

**Panel C (Fiction and Poetry) Panelists:** Isabella Lough, Robert Diez, Jessica Cobbinah, Joy Lin, Rafael Rodas

**Panel Chair:** Kelsey Rall, English



# PARTICIPANTS

## ABSTRACTS & BIOS

### MATTHEW CELECIA

#### ***Scrubs and Smoke***

This is a creative non-fiction piece that is based on a real experience. I am working on an English Thesis & Immersion Project that contains stories that revolve around death. In this post-covid world, it seems to me that the act of dying has been dehumanized – reduced to numbers, figures, statistics – so my goal with these works is to rehumanize death through stories centered on the individual.

*Matthew is a member of the Class of 2023.*

### JESSICA COBBINAH

#### ***Takes One to Know One***

“Takes One to Know One” follows two college students whose increasingly toxic friendship allows them to enable each other’s hyperfixation on an unsuspecting classmate. Things come to a head when one of them takes their game too far.

*Jessie is a member of the class of 2023 from Nashville studying Secondary Education and English. She has been writing since she could hold a pencil and hopes to continue for the rest of her life. After graduation, she hopes to find a job that allows her to combine her passion for writing with her passion for education, and she is so thankful to Vanderbilt’s English department for giving her so many opportunities and making her a better writer.*

### LOLA DALEY

#### ***Become What You Are***

Are you what you become or do you become what you are? This piece addresses that very question, proposing that the artificial form into which we try to shape ourselves cannot hold.

*Lola is a member of the class of 2025 from San Francisco, CA majoring in Psychology and minoring in Cinema and Media Arts. Writing—whether in the form of short stories, plays, or songs—has been a creative outlet for her since she was a kid, and she hopes to pursue it in the future along with a career in research and clinical psychology. In addition to writing, she loves running, playing piano, analyzing movies, and (attempting to) bake.*

### ROBERT DIEZ

#### ***He Saw Me and Smiled***

This piece is my take on the College Scholars application prompt in which we had to write a two-page paper featuring a grape, giraffe, and guitar. I saw them as metaphors for a fragile mind state—the confrontation of which was the only way to grow. Blending the abstract with reality, He Saw Me and Smiled illustrates that as daunting as it is, taking the first step—however small—means the potential for something great.

*Robert Diez is a member of the Class of 2026 from Miami, Florida, studying Economics and Climate Studies with a minor in Cinema & Media Arts. He seeks out any opportunity for self-expression, and how that intersects with the rapidly-changing world around him.*

### Ilana Drake

#### ***from here, my mountain lakes, changed. / power of language***

My poem, “from here, my mountain lakes, changed.” focuses on the end of high school and spending time with my grandparents in their hometown. I highlighted memories of my grandparents from when they were younger and more able-bodied. I was inspired to write “power of language” because of my own experiences as a student with a disability in the classroom. This piece highlights how language can be weaponized to cause damage.

*Ilana is a member of the class of 2025 studying Public Policy Studies, and she is a student activist and writer. She serves as a United Nations UNA-USA Global Goals Ambassador for SDG 4 (Education), and she is a Clinton Global Initiative University Fellow. Ilana is recognized as one of the forty undergraduate changemakers on Vanderbilt’s campus by the Chancellor and Vanderbilt Student Government. Ilana’s writing has been published in PBS NewsHour, Ms. Magazine, and The Tennessean, and she has been quoted in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Teen Vogue. Her poetry has been published internationally in literary magazines and zines. She is a trainer with the Vanderbilt Unity Lab, and she is involved in The Hustler. In her free time, she enjoys swimming, exploring Nashville with friends, and searching for the best coffee.*

## **QWYNN FOSTER**

### ***Ghazal of Those Unsolved***

This piece comes from a poetry anthology I made for my Intermediate Poetry class. This particular poem is about a Siren reflecting on his understanding of love and what that means now.

*Qwynn is a member of the class of 2025.*

## **HUNTER GRAVES**

### ***The Two Lives of Trevor Warren***

Trevor Warren, a college student, analyzes his family's past and present as he examines their different realities. The piece follows Trevor as he visits his home and his family.

*Hunter Graves is a member of the Class of 2024 studying History and Russian Studies. In his free time, he enjoys reading, going on hikes, and visiting his family and hometown of Franklin, Kentucky. When he's not in class or at home, he can be found in his happy place, either at a library or the local cathedral.*

## **CHRISTABEL HAMMOND**

### ***Common App Essay***

The "Common App" explores the complexity of navigating institutions as a minority. It uses themes of family, traditions and race to spark conversation about the power dynamic of affirmative action and its impact. The poem draws inspiration from Christabel's Ghanaian heritage where a significant amount of slave trade happened in order to make comparisons and reflect on progress since then.

*Christabel is a member of the class of 2023 studying Medicine Health and Society on the pre-med track where she hopes to improve health equity. Although she was born in New York, Christabel describes Accra Ghana as her home because she spent her formative years there. She currently lives in Ohio with her family where she hopes to return to after she graduates. In her free time, she enjoys exploring her various hobbies such as travel, fashion, books, cooking and spending time with her friends and family.*

## **ISABELLA LOUGH**

### ***Scattered Chrysanthemums***

Scattered Chrysanthemums follows Charlie's journey to the Bell Witch Cave in Adams, TN as she grapples with the recent loss of her best friend. The family Charlie encounters is also grappling with a recent loss, and the reader can see in them a hopeful future. A mysterious voice in the cave pushes Charlie to stop pushing away her emotions and fully digest the situation at hand.

*Bella is a member of the class of 2025 majoring in psychology and minoring in business. She has a passion for mental health that extends into her love for psychological thrillers. If she is not busy writing, you'll find her singing with the university musical theater club, texting her sister, or working with kids in a social cognition lab here at Vanderbilt.*

## **FAROUK RAMZAN**

### ***Anima Candida***

In 19th century Denmark, a sickly aristocrat rots his body and inherited land away as he obsesses over economic theory. One day, however, he attends a ballet show and becomes intrigued by one of the dancers and how she wavers when she lands on stage. He eventually meets her and becomes friends with her and remains intrigued by her odd behavior. The dancer shows him a way of living that embraces work and living in accordance with the wild which leads him to abandon his book and embrace a folk lifestyle.

*Farouk Ramzan, a member of the class of 2026, is majoring in psychology in the College of Arts & Science. Farouk is from San Antonio, Texas and runs his own podcast called, "Notes from Nash." In his free time, he fishes, does film photography, writes novels, screenplays and skeet shoots. He is interested in a vast era of topics ranging from statistical theory to architecture to Russian literature.*

## **RAFAEL RODAS**

### ***Empty Cube***

"Empty Cube," was inspired by an empty exhibition at the Frist Art Museum. The poem simultaneously explores the scenes of a new wave of visitors arriving and the emotional impact that comes with being a misfit in a such prestigious environment.

*Rafael Rodas is a member of the Class of 2026 from Santa Tecla, El Salvador. He is majoring in Electrical and Computer Engineering and in his free time enjoys writing poetry and short fiction.*

## **SIDNEY VAFAIE-PARTIN**

### ***Snake Stories***

This piece is a retelling of a bedtime story my mother used to tell me woven with details and tidbits she has given me about her life in Iran before her immigration to the US. I think the poem focuses mostly on the divide between generations especially in immigrant families. The work also examines storytelling and its power.

*Sidney is a member of the class of 2024 majoring in Biology with a minor in creative writing. He is inspired by poets like Seamus Heaney, Ross Gay, and Federico Lorca.*

## **JOY YIN**

### ***Natural Enharmonics***

A father sits down to play piano while ruminating upon his relationship with his son and his own father, with his relationship to music as a framework.

*Joy is a member of the class of 2025.*

## **LILY YORK**

### ***Feminity in the Seasons***

For the first paper of the year, I was forced to think of a time in which I was gendered. After much reflection, I decided to tell the story of how I imprisoned myself to femininity during the time in which I struggled most with my Chronic Depression.

*Lily York is a member of the class of 2026 at Vanderbilt University, majoring in Political Science and Environmental Sociology. She is from Louisville, Kentucky and doesn't have much experience with writing, but loves to share about feminism, sustainability, and mental health.*

# SHOWCASE

## PARTICIPANTS

**MATHILDE CAINDEC '23**

*Economics*



**Ancient Greek Inspired Fashion**, Fiber Arts

Mentor: Alexandra Sargent Capps, Theatre  
CLAS 1010 | Intro to Mediterranean Studies

**JONAH CRIST '24**

*Human and Organizational Development;  
Economics*

**Snapshots**, Collage

Mentor: Kristen Tompkins, Peabody  
HOD 4952 | Mapping Future Personal and  
Professional Development

**MEGAN GROSSE '26**

*Art; Mathematics*

**Looking In and Out**, Acrylic Painting

Mentor: Alexandra Blau, Art  
ARTS 1300 | Painting

**JAHYNE "JJ" JOHNSON '23**

*Chemistry*



**Black Romanticism**, Printed Poetry Collection

Mentor: Pavneet Aulakh, English

**MADY JOHNSTON '24**

*Studio Art; Architecture and the Built  
Environment*

**Ouch!**, Linoleum Cut

Mentor: Mark Hosford, Art  
ARTS 1600 | Printmaking I

**HYOUNGJIN LEE '23**

*Chemistry*

**Paths**, Photobook

Mentor: Lauren Buchanan, Chemistry

**MEHAK MALHORTA '25**

*Human and Organizational Development*

**Her Ethereal Enigma**, Photography

Mentor: Tamara Reynolds, Art  
ARTS 1202 / Photography in Digital Culture

**ETHAN MILTON '25**

*Mechanical Engineering*

**Pseudorandom Explorations**, Digital Stills and  
Videos

**FAROUK RAMZAN '26**

*Undeclared*

**Endless Night**, Short Film

Mentor: Jonathan Waters, Cinema and Media Arts  
CMA 1500 | Fundamentals of Film Production

**LEILANI RUCKER '26**

*Economics*

**Upcycling in the Fiber Arts Lab**, Fiber Arts

Mentor: Alexandra Sargent Capps, Theatre

**RACHEL SARUBBI '24**

*Culinary*

**Princess and the Frog Modern Fashion**, Fiber Arts

Mentor: Alexander Sargent Capps, Theatre  
THTR 3741 | Costume Design

**CHILESI URIRI '23**

*Psychology; Medicine, Health, and Society*

**My Gele (Series)**, Charcoal

Mentor: Angus Galloway, Art  
ARTS 1102 | Drawing and Composition I

**FRANK ZHOU '25**

*Neuroscience; Medicine, Health, and Society*

**Intertwined**, Charcoal

Mentor: Angus Galloway, Art  
ARTS 1102 | Drawing and Composition I





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The Vanderbilt Undergraduate Creative Writing Symposium and Arts Showcase are sponsored by the Vanderbilt Writing Studio and Office of Experiential Learning and Immersion Vanderbilt.

For more information on future showcases or symposiums, please contact:

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