

Editors Column

Korean Dance at the National History Museum



Summer Park
Grade 11
Harvard-Westlake School



Synchronized movement transformed individual dancers into a single collective form, resembling flower petals.
[Source: Author, Summer Park]

On Sunday, January 18th, The Natural History Museum’s (NHM) Commons Theater was packed with families, students, and locals for a performance by Kim Eung Hwa & The Korean Dance Academy. Part of the museum’s Dancing

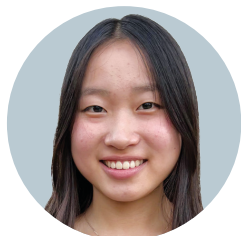
in L.A. series, the event brought traditional Korean culture to life through a vibrant showcase of music and movement. I attended the 3:00 P.M. performance, alongside a large, multi-generational crowd. The

choreography focused on themes like nature and unity, using bright colors and fluid motions to tell a story. The fan dance was definitely the crowd favorite. The dancers were so perfectly in sync, exemplifying a single flower with their petals opening and closing. As someone who knows how to fan dance, I could tell how much work and effort went into that level of precision; many hours of practice probably went into perfecting this dance. The audience clearly felt it as well, reacting with “oohs” and “ahhs” along with plenty of applause throughout the piece. The show kicked off with elaborate court-style dances that were originally performed for royalty. The costumes were incredibly detailed, which caught the eye of many attendees. Judy, a 76-year-old resident from Wilshire Park, shared her appreciation for the visual side of the performance, noting, “The costumes were absolutely striking, and it was nice to hear the meaning behind each of the costumes from the dancer.” It wasn’t just the adults who were into it; the performance also

reached a lot of younger kids in the audience. A fifth grader visiting the museum with his family remarked that the music was his favorite part. “I think I would want to one day learn how to play the drums. That would be cool. I don’t know about all the other different sounds,” he said, mentioning it was the first time he’d ever heard this type of traditional Korean music. Another highlight of the program was the performance of “Arirang,” a song often called Korea’s second national anthem. A woman in her 30s noted that she had heard the song before in choir performances and understood its significance. By the end of the show, it was clear that the event had reached people of all ages and backgrounds. Through dance, music, and storytelling, the showcase managed to bridge the gap between different cultures and generations, fulfilling the mission of Dancing in L.A. to celebrate cultural expression through live performance. Personally, seeing a tradition I’m familiar with get that kind of spotlight was a real treat.

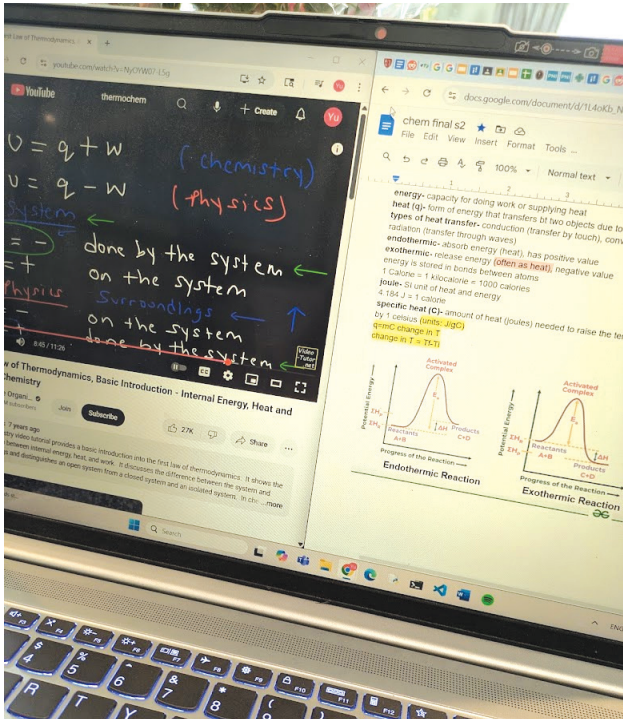
Student Reporter

The Art of Office Hours



Evalyn Yu
Grade 10
Palos Verdes High School

It is 7 a.m. on a typical Wednesday in high school. School does not start for another three hours, and the campus is empty except for one chemistry classroom. Inside, students buzz from table to table, asking questions, murmuring in study groups, and discussing homework answers. Welcome to office hours. Office hours are designated times outside of class where teachers are available to meet with students and answer questions. Still, many students shy away from attending. Some are overwhelmed with juggling academics, extracurriculars, and other responsibilities. Others would rather relax than spend their free time in a classroom. Above all, many are held back by an unspoken belief—that going to office hours is a sign of defeat. However, attending office hours can actually alleviate academic stress. “When you have especially big classes or challenging material, a lot of students benefit from having extra time with their teachers,” AP Chemistry teacher Jennifer Fleming said. “Chemistry is a hard topic for a lot of students, and it’s not something [they] have a lot of free support for. [Office hours] is an opportunity to get one-on-one feedback that you don’t always get in class.” Dean



Students share study guides and resources with one another during office hours.
[Source: Author, Evalyn Yu]

Choi, a junior at Palos Verdes High School, regularly gets to school early to visit his teachers’ classrooms. “Asking questions has really made me realize that most teachers really want you to learn. Last year in physics, I had a hard time understanding [electric potential], but after going into office

hours, I felt really confident. I still understand those concepts to this day,” Choi said. Beyond academics, office hours help students build meaningful relationships with teachers. “The students I know best are always the ones who come to office hours,” Fleming said. “If a student

wants a letter of recommendation, I have a lot more information and experience to pull from, [such as] how they seek help, how they are motivated, how they communicate, and how they respond to feedback.” I personally began frequenting office hours this year to combat my late-night study slumps. At first, I was hesitant to go because I felt awkward admitting I needed help. Nevertheless, I convinced myself to show up. I quickly realized that talking through homework solutions in person was much more effective than spending hours hunching over jargony textbook explanations. I have since gained a deeper appreciation for my classes and trusted adults to talk to. Now, whether I am working through a fascinating calculus problem on the board or listening to my teachers’ career advice and life wisdom, spending time in office hours no longer feels like a sacrifice. Going to office hours taught me that asking for help is not something to be ashamed of. According to math teacher Joshua Genauer, “Capitalizing on seeking help is a sign of strength, confidence, social ability, and emotional intelligence.” Office hours, when utilized well, are key to enriching one’s learning beyond the classroom.

Student Reporter

A Hidden Escape: The Beauty of Borrego Springs



Paisley Park
Grade 10
South Pasadena High School

Hidden in the heart of the desert, there is a place full of adventure, nature, and unexpected beauty. In Borrego Springs, just three hours from Los Angeles, there are plenty of options to escape the loud crowds, convenient for a quick getaway. Within its wide skies, smooth roads, and calm mornings, there are a plethora of landmarks and hikes to choose from, such as the Galleta Meadows Sculptures and the Slot Canyon trail. For those who enjoy nature and an easy adventure, Borrego Springs offers a fun change of pace. At five in the morning, my family and I headed to Fonts Point, a cliff where the sunrise view is extremely clear. We ended up overlooking the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, a series of mountainous rocks with weathered water patterns. These are due to the Salton Trough, a depression from the north that flowed long ago. The sun lit up the entire canyon below us, and it felt so special seeing the day begin with illuminating colors and years of nature’s history. During the daytime, a fun and leisurely activity is to explore the Borrego Palm Canyon Trail, a scenic hike about two hours long. This trail leads to a palm oasis, a beautiful watery area tucked within tall palm trees. I was fortunate to spot the endangered



A view from Fonts Point just after sunrise, showcasing the natural beauty of the desert and its many features.
[Source: Author, Paisley Park]



A view of Fonts Point after sunrise, where the weathering and layers of the rocks are evident.
[Source: Author, Paisley Park]

bighorn sheep along the mountainsides. It was such a rewarding and picturesque walk that made me feel more in touch with nature and the desert wildlife. One of Borrego Springs’ most iconic attractions is the Galleta Meadows, a whimsical sculpture garden filled with larger-than-life-sized metal animals, including insects, elephants, and the most famous, a dragon. Over 130 figures are featured, and exploring the gardens takes just a quick drive down the road. The showstopping sea dragon appears to

loop under and above ground through the street, nearly 350 feet long and fifteen feet above ground. I personally loved the scorpion for its sheer detail, with its carefully crafted legs and tail. This garden was a dramatic addition to the landscape, not unlike an outdoor art gallery. A great way to conclude this getaway trip is at the Slot Canyon, a short hike of under an hour. Once you climb down the slot, the atmosphere of the tall, sloping canyons surrounding the trail differs from the average desert hike.

It was memorable since, unlike a normal desert walk, it felt hidden, like a secret spot, with quiet ambience and smooth stones encompassing the area. Overall, the mix of adventure, hiking, and views in Borrego Springs makes it absolutely worth visiting. Not only is it very convenient to travel to, but it is also not overly touristy or crowded, and it is something for both active and relaxed travelers. Borrego Springs is a place to slow down, explore, and reconnect with nature.

Editors Column

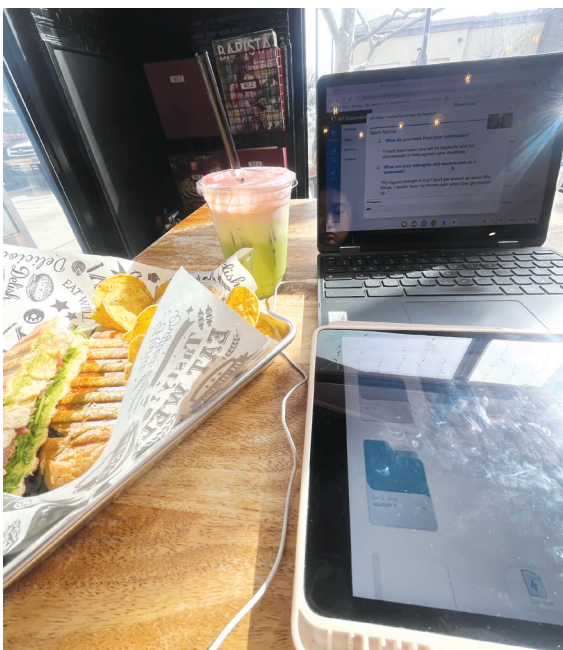
Platform 909: A Welcoming Cafe in Chino Hills



Kaylyn Wee
Grade 10
Ayala High School



Platform 909 has a calming and welcoming environment, coming from the warm lighting and homey interior design.
[Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]



Platform 909 serves as a place for students to come study while enjoying tasty drinks and brunch meals.
[Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

In the city of Chino Hills, California, there are several cafes and spots to grab a drink; however, Platform 909 is a coffee shop that truly stands out from the others. From its sweet beginnings to the welcoming environment, the cafe stands as a place for thoughtful conversations and delicious brunch items. Many customers come in not only to grab a quick bite and tasty drinks, but to be productive and spend time alone or with others. On the menu, there are many signature items,

new arrivals for different seasons, and there is much more in store for this franchise. When thinking about the background of Platform 909, it seemed like it was fate. Originally, the owners wanted to start a boba shop, but while on the search for an available building for the business, a mutual friend introduced them to the previous owner of Platform 909, who was planning on closing it. This was just a great opportunity for the current owners, as they had

been interested in coffee for a while. The place was redecorated, and the new owners started fresh; unfortunately, the first few months were slow and had low profit. However, the family powered through and spent time researching new menus and drinks. Now, Platform 909 is booming with success, with many regulars visiting daily. Upon walking inside, the cafe presents a welcoming environment, which makes the place easy to fall in love with. The warm light-

ing, enriching music, and chatter within the space creates an inviting atmosphere; the interior is not flashy or dramatic, more so comfortable and familiar, where people can come to enjoy drinks and different brunch items. In fact, a range of ages come to study for school or get work done, from young high school students to older employed individuals. Platform 909 has a full menu of delicious drinks and meals. Their most popular items are their Banana Matcha, Banana Pecan Latte, and Basil Pesto Chicken Panini. The cafe has also renewed its matcha menu and added numerous new drinks, like their Ceremonial Hojicha Latte, Coconut Strawberry Cloud, and so many more, all just this year. As for brunch items, the cafe offers panini sandwiches, bagels, and baked goods such as cookies and muffins. The menu of Platform 909 has a variety of tasty items and satisfies all its customers. Overall, Platform 909 is more than just another coffee shop in Chino Hills; it reflects a space built on community and passion. Through its inviting atmosphere, evolving menu, and commitment to customers, the cafe continues to leave a lasting impression on people who walk through the doors. Anybody who lives in Chino Hills or is passing through must visit Platform 909 for a quick bite or drink; it will be the best part of the day.

Student Reporter

TACFA Performance Inspires Young Musicians



Elizabeth Kim
Grade 9
Beckman High School

As a part of the Tustin Area Council of Fine Arts (TACFA) program, the Beckman High School Chamber Orchestra and Wind Ensemble recently performed for young students. Students from both groups worked diligently over a few short weeks to prepare a performance for fourth graders that would hopefully inspire them to take up a musical instrument and join music programs in high school later on. The real experience started before members of the orchestra and band ever went on stage. Before the performance, they went down into the audience seats, teaching students about the instruments, playing some tunes, and bantering with the kids. Although I was not able to play all of their song requests, answering questions from the kids was still a fun experience. Their innocent questions and surprise about the instrument I play every day made me realize how grateful I am to have the privilege of music as my creative outlet. It was truly refreshing and adorable to see their curiosity. For the actual performance,



In between performances, I was able to go down into the audience seats, directly teaching the younger students about my instrument and playing some tunes.
[Source: Author, Elizabeth Kim]

both groups prepared a variety of pieces from popular media that the fourth graders would recognize, in order to gain their interest. Some crowd favorites included the Chamber Orchestra's programmed piece, "Golden" from "KPop Demon Hunters." Many even sang along during the performance, bringing more energy to the orchestra. For the

Wind Ensemble, the soundtracks from the "Incredibles" and "How to Train Your Dragon" were the most popular. As a member of this group, the change from the initial confusion on the kids' faces to joy when they recognized the tunes from their favorite movies was very rewarding to see. Not only did the orchestra and band members inspire the

children before and during the concert, but they were also able to interact with them directly after. In fact, a member of the Chamber Orchestra, Katie, stated that the most memorable part of the concert was "The kids coming up to us after the performance and telling us they wanted to play the violin for the rest of their lives." It was heartwarming to see the dedication to preparing the pieces pay off by inspiring future musicians to begin their own journeys. Another musician, Andrea from the Wind Ensemble, said, "I'm really happy I got to spend potentially one of my last high school concerts with this group of band kids and this group of adorable children! It's always one of the events I look forward to every year; and I truly enjoy just playing fun tunes for the kids and spending this time to bond with other kids my age." Overall, the TACFA concert was a great way to inspire young students to join the arts while also helping older high schoolers to realize the importance of music and the friendships formed from it. I am excited to participate again next year!

Student Reporter

Sun Valley Shines Bright with Neighborhood Pride



Jane Yoon
Grade 10
Larchmont Charter School

On January 24th, Shine LA, the citywide beautification initiative by Mayor Bass, brought together residents and city leaders across Los Angeles for a day focused on community service, neighborhood pride, and civic engagement. While the initiative took place in neighborhoods throughout the city, one event in Sun Valley offered a view of how the citywide initiative aims to connect residents, especially youth, with local leadership. The day in Sun Valley began with a community clean-up aiming to beautify the neighborhood. Volunteers, ranging from young students to long-time residents, focused on various parts of the area near the local park that have symbolized the town's ongoing challenges. Working under the bright sun, groups picked up litter and garbage along the sidewalks. This hands-on work immediately allowed residents to see a positive change in their community. At the Sun Valley site, Mayor Karen Bass, Board of Public Works President Steve Kang, Councilmember Adrin Nazarian, and Councilmember Imelda Padilla spoke with residents about

ongoing challenges in the area, including homelessness, sanitation, and neighborhood conditions. The officials focused on addressing community concerns and emphasizing the importance of long-term solutions that go beyond just one day of service. Each official delivered brief remarks highlighting the purpose of Shine LA: to encourage residents to take pride in their neighborhoods while reminding citizens of their responsibility to always provide support. Mayor Bass spoke up about the value of a shared approach to investing in people and public spaces across Los Angeles. Steve Kang emphasized the role of public works in maintaining clean and safe neighborhoods, connecting city policy to the conditions residents experience daily. Councilmember Nazarian and Padilla showed the importance of constantly being involved, encouraging residents to remain engaged beyond Shine LA. For youth in attendance, the event highlighted how local government interacts with communities. Seeing city leaders engage directly with residents makes many feel heard and seen, mak-



City officials such as Mayor Karen Bass, Councilmember Adrin Nazarian, and Councilmember Imelda Padilla share words of motivation at the Shine LA event.
[Source: Author, Jane Yoon]

ing issues such as homelessness and infrastructure feel immediate. Sun Valley, a neighborhood that has long experienced visible homelessness, became a starting point for broader conversations about how these challenges affect communities. Although the Sun Valley event was just one of many Shine LA



Volunteers and residents join to clean and beautify the Sun Valley neighborhood.
[Source: Author, Jane Yoon]

gatherings happening throughout Los Angeles, it has created spaces where residents and officials can have honest conversations about community needs in Los Angeles. For young attendees, the event reflected that civic engagement is not limited to voting or volunteering, but also speaking up and advocating continuously.