



Christmas Edition



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The True Gift of Gift-Giving

Gretchen Hatley
Copy Editor

During the Holiday Season, gift-giving plays a grand role in how we celebrate and participate in our traditions and customs. Rather; gift-giving itself has become a tradition and custom. We can find ourselves getting quite wrapped up in the numerous bows and boxes, lists and orders, and multiple other things around this winter wonderland time of the year. It's always good to remember the why in gift-giving and explore the pure gift that lies within it.

Gift-giving is not an exclusive practice as it was once held to. The origin of gift-giving can be seen throughout history in many ways and different time periods. As Christmas is a relatively Christian holiday, it showcases gift-giving as a symbol that represents the tributes made to baby Jesus by the Three Wise Men after He was born, during the story of the Nativity. However, as we continue to deep dive in our history, gift-giving even played a significant part before the founding of Christianity. In Ancient Rome, festivals that were held during this time included gift-giving, as it was an aspect incorporated in many documented festivals. One festival in particular that may ring of similarity to Christmas was known as Saturnalia.

Saturnalia was a festival and holiday that commenced to honor the God Saturn. Private gift-giving was a crucial part during Saturnalia, along with bubbling, lively social gatherings. It's also said that standards and rules were "done-away-with" as free speech was warmly

embraced and Roman social norms were overturned. Saturnalia took place starting December 17th through the 23rd of the same month. The gifts exchanged were usually 'sigillaria', which are small pottery or wax figurines. Though, on the other hand, the gifts could also have been pure gags and jokes. This can be seen when poet Catullus described his excitement of Saturnalia and about his friend Calvus.

"Catullus writes about Calvus, his friend and fellow poet as they battle to see who can give the worst gift during the festival of Saturnalia. Catullus writes how excited he is for Saturnalia, the Roman festival in mid-December. During this festival, Romans exchanged gifts, ate, drank, and partied." ... "Catullus clearly enjoyed this festival as he called it the "best of days" and he found it funny that Calvus gave him a book filled with poetry by the worst poets. To get revenge for the terrible book of poetry, Catullus will give Calvus a gift filled with equally bad poems by the likes of "Caesii, Aquini, and Suffenus, and all such poisonous stuff."

Gift-giving may be viewed as simply a Christmas ritual, but this act is much more than what is seen on surface-level. Giving gifts in our time has become a universal way we express gratitude, appreciation, interest, and adoration. It's a token of our emotions and builds already well-established relationships. From searching for the gift itself and watching it be received - gift-giving is much more than a physical item. Gift-giving can more or less be tied into Altruism, which is the practice of having an unbiased,

is the practice of having an unbiased, selfless concern for the well-being of those around you. We give to others with the intention to not get in return; it's a genuine act of compassion done in a considerate, heartfelt manner.

"There is an enormous sense of satisfaction when seeing the expression on the face of someone you've given a gift to. A way to express feelings, giving reinforces appreciation and acknowledgement of each other."

Sentimental, funny, helpful, thoughtful: these are all words that can describe the intent behind a gift. Such a positive act builds positivity and boosts positive feelings, which is exactly what gift-giving does. A response such as that can improve mental well-being for both the gift giver and receiver.

Though, for some, going out and buying presents, or even just thinking of what the presents in question may be, can be stressful. The holidays are full of laughter and spending quality time with one another; it can be worrying to think that what we give to others can negatively affect the cheer that surrounds this time of the year. However, anxiety of value isn't the only-



concern some people have. Financial problems, issues that occur behind the scenes, time management, etc. can all interfere and feel like a weight on someone's shoulders.

With Christmas being right around the corner, it's important to keep in mind why we celebrate and who we are surrounding ourselves with. Christmas may be the time of giving, but that doesn't necessarily mean material items. Your time is a gift as well. Never be in a circle with people that you feel would prefer to have an item in their hands rather than just your presence alone during this festive month. You can put bows on gifts and aesthetically wrap them, but who you are will always shine the most and brightest: and that is an irreplaceable gift.

The Nutcracker at Twitchell Auditorium

Michael Lawless
Copy Editor

The Nutcracker: Presented with Ballet Spartanburg was held at Converse College in the Twitchell Auditorium, Spartanburg SC. The Spartanburg Ballet and the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra are back this holiday season with their annual performance of "The Nutcracker". For many in the upstate of South Carolina, it has become an annual tradition to watch this spectacular show as a family event or for a special date night.

The performance of "The Nutcracker" has been an incredible collaboration between the two groups that make up the largest performing arts organizations in the South Carolina Upstate region. This performance marks the second consecutive year that these groups have combined their resources to put on one of the best renditions of Tchaikovsky's timeless classic in the country. The stage design was absolutely breathtaking. The cast spread out over the large stage located at converse college with a towering backdrop, featuring evergreens covered in snow, highlighted by intricate red. Add to this, colorful and clever costumes, original choreography and lush music conducted by guest conductor Geneviève Leclair, and you can see why this production stands apart from all other versions of The Nutcracker.

Every dance sequence was uniquely staged, capturing both old and new aspects of -

-Tchaikovsky's work; each number contained interesting changes to classic pieces such as the Snowflakes scene which was led by the full orchestra, giving it more depth and complexity while still honoring its traditional roots. From Clara's fantastical dream-like journey throughout her grandparent's house and ultimately into a mystical realm filled with living dolls and marionettes to our hero battling bravely against evil Rat King alongside heroic toy soldiers, each movement served to engage audiences young and old alike, who eagerly awaited for Clara's famous Waltz of Flowers routine accompanied by the splendid musicians of the Spartanburg Philharmonic.

It would be criminal to neglect just how well the Spartanburg Philharmonic performed Tchaikovsky's score, as from the opening moment when the first note was played the crowd knew they were in for something special. The room vibrated with enthusiasm as Geneviève kept pace with the dancers throughout every act, bringing both beauty and intensity from each section. From grand crescendos to tender movements, every instrument was flawlessly synchronized creating a wonderful soundscape that captured the audience heart.

This year's performers included Campbell Milner who enthralled viewers with her-



beautiful portrayal of Clara throughout her journey, and Owen Hopkins brought plenty of energy as Fritz, his array of acrobatics were easily able to hold the audience attention which allowed the two dancers to brilliantly captivate viewers through their sensational performance during every turn they took! Aside from the two leading roles the side characters performed spectacularly, the most notable example's being the sheep's playful energy and the munchkins phenomenal performance under Mother Ginger.

It would be impossible not to mention the Sugar plum fairy who shined brightly throughout each dance she appeared in during II delivering solid pirouettes time after time coupled with gracefully jumping high leaps allowing audiences to admire her impressive athleticism mixed with beautiful artistry! In conclusion I can't recommend this magnificent performance highly enough; whether it be your first visit or perhaps you are a returning guest it truly will provide entertainment that delights all age groups along with memories that will last forever!

What Symbolizes Christmas?

Lilly Walker
Staff Writer



Our society no longer recognizes Jesus as the symbolic meaning of Christmas. Within the Christian faith, Christmas symbolizes the celebration of God's gift, Jesus. But society assumes it is a day to be grateful and get tons of presents while hanging out with family. But we have confused its recognition of joy toward God's son, Jesus. We do not see it as a time to be joyful about the birth of Jesus Christ. The spirit of Christmas creates an atmosphere of warm colorful lights, parades, beautiful decorations, family, and food. We are supposed to be happy on this day, but do we know the reason?

The true meaning of Christmas is love. The bible says John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but save the world through him."

The true meaning of Christmas is the celebration of this incredible act of love.

Christmas is different for everyone; it is a time to hang out with family and friends and be grateful for everything around them. Christmas can be lonely for a lot of people, but do we really see Christmas as being a time to celebrate Jesus for being born or celebrate a fake character, Santa Claus/Saint Nick coming down your chimney with presents? Well, the Lord wants us to be happy on this day, like how his gift was Jesus, he wants us to have our own gift.

As a society Christmas should be celebrated and acknowledge Jesus Christ. This generation is focused on one but not the other, losing focus that both are important to society with bringing the Christmas spirit but above all, Christmas is the time for love, healing, and rejoicing. Christmas is a time to be happy, who can hate Christmas?

For some people it is their favorite time of the year, Christmas is one of my favorite holidays. Growing up I never really knew the true meaning of Christmas; I thought it was a day when I got gifts and was so happy with my family, until I became an active member of church, I learned that it was the day Jesus was born and I never heard anyone talk about it before then. I feel like we do not acknowledge this at the level of how we celebrate Santa and gift giving. Why do we celebrate Christmas, placing Santa at a larger hierarchy when most people do not know the true reason.



"A Diversified Perspective on Christmas"

Kaylee Reid
Staff Writer

It is said that Jesus is the true meaning of Christmas. But what about Atheist, Buddhist, Taoism, etc.? Their beliefs differ in comparison to the teachings of the Christian faith; the Trinity. The Christian faith follows the understanding of the "Trinity", defining one God existing in three coequal, co-eternal divine, consubstantial persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, three distinct persons sharing one homoousion. Christians and Non-Christians celebrate the Christmas holiday. Everybody has their differences and their opinions. Christmas is a time to celebrate with family and friends. It is a time to come together and be able to help people.

The Christmas holiday is not just about Jesus and him being born. It is about family and friends sharing love, comfort, and hospitality. Being able to share a meal together, watch movies, drink hot chocolate, and give presents. Togetherness is part of the spirit of Christmas. It is the thought that you put into other people when getting them gifts,

you ask yourself "How will they feel about this gift?" Christmas is a selfless time, a time to forgive and to think about other people in your life, not just yourself. Christmas is when you can look back at the recent year or even past years and see who and what is important and what is not. Christmas is a time for us to better ourselves and become better people. Christmas is not just about receiving gifts or exchanging gifts, Christmas is about giving. Even if you do not celebrate Christmas, you still feel the universal love of the Christmas spirit as it spreads throughout the world. Seeing family and friends post each other and their happy families coming together for this special time of year. Seeing little kids ripping open presents on Christmas morning and absolutely loving what they got. Even teenagers who stay in their room all day come out to celebrate with their family and friends. Seeing people post about their family traditions and share what they know about it so that other people could pick up the tradition if they wanted to. During December as it grows closer and

and closer to Christmas people become more charitable, accepting, and generous. Not just with gifts, friends, and family but also with the world outside them. Seeing people while shopping, as a customer and employee, people are a lot nicer and more understanding. They are not as dramatic and do not cause a scene. You would think that people would be nice all year long if they could be nice once a year, it must be the cold Christmas air that makes people change.

Christmas is about helping people in need, helping family or friends get their shopping done, taking time to talk to them, help people visit family members, help cook, or even invite them out to festivities. Yes, Jesus is an important part to Christmas because we would not have Christmas without his birth, but he is not the only important thing to remember. Giving, being together, feeling the love of friends and family, being kinder and helping people in need is the true Christmas meaning.

"To Gift or Not to Gift Wrap"

Za'Riah Smith
Staff Writer

It is Christmas morning; you wake up and feel the warmth of your bed and hear the silence throughout the house. Instantaneously, you are reminded of this feeling from year's past. You have an awakening sensation of what to expect next, as you jump up from your bed with excitement and run down the hallway. What do you see as you enter your living room underneath the Christmas tree? Some children see unwrapped toys, clothes, and gifts. Other households see wrapped toys, clothes, and gifts. What do you see every year on Christmas morning?

Across America, parents are torn between wrapping or unwrapped presents being visual underneath the Christmas tree, on Christmas morning. This tradition has become a staple in many households growing up as children, so when they become parents, it is a tradition they are not willing to break.

It has been a debate between parents and guardians for many years. I think the gifts should be wrapped because if they are not, I feel as if it is not part of the tradition. Also, for younger kids who just walk into the living room with gifts that are not wrapped I feel like it is not a surprise for them.

On Christmas morning would you like to walk into your living room with all the gifts unwrapped? My preference is wrapped gifts. I personally like opening gift bags and ripping paper to get to the gift. The excitement of wondering what is under all that beautiful wrapping paper is thrilling. I feel like that is more fun than walking up and seeing that new phone and hoodie that you have wanted for so long. For the children who believe in Santa Claus, it is more believable for them to see their presents wrapped than unwrapped. As a society, we have a visual tradition of Santa carrying a large red bag full of - -wrapped presents. Even in movies Santa is always carrying a large red bag with wrapped presents.



Not the Stereotypical Christmas Film

Kyndra Peterson
Co-Editor-in-Chief



Violent Night, a rated R "Christmas" movie that released on Friday, December 2nd, has been taking the theaters by storm with the main character Santa being the "Stranger Things" actor David Harbour. Directed by Tommy Wirkola the movie had a pretty good turn out, not only with the ticket holders who came out to watch, but also with the movie itself. The trailer that released held no exception; it was well-edited and enticed interest in the film. It most definitely engaged my interest to watch it.

On a wealthy estate, a family gathers to celebrate yet another Christmas. With fake smiles, the characters are trying to appease one another and be the favorite child of their mother Gertrude. When a group of unnamed mercenaries attack trying to steal an undeserved fortune, a drunk and depressed Santa Clause (David Harbour) must stop the hostile takeover by any means necessary to save the family's daughter

"Home Alone" and "Die Hard 1&2". This movie was EXTREMELY gory and had many death scenes that gave us throwbacks to the classics; such as when Trudy was stuck in the attic and had to use tactics from the "Home Alone" movie to outsmart her foes until Santa arrived, to not only save her but Christmas as well. Unlike other movies surrounding Jolly Old Saint Nick, "Violent Night" went into the background of Santa and showed some of his past which I've rarely ever seen done in these movies. Unfortunately, the writing at the end of the movie let me down, as I was able to immediately guess the direction the movie and the foreshadowed ending. I turned to my friend and proceeded to predict the end of the movie almost without flaw. In the end, Santa wins and defeats all of the bad guys. However, he suffered a fatal blow during his fight with the main villains. Soon after, Mr. Clause dies due to a gunshot wound and is magically brought back to life by the

and unlovable people, but were able to give Santa enough magic to execute a Christmas miracle. The theater I was in was cracking up for most of the movie and almost everybody really seemed to enjoy it. My friend, a very squeamish human, had to walk out of the theater at one point she was so disturbed. I definitely wouldn't say this movie is for the faint of heart, however if you aren't squeamish, I highly recommend this movie; it's definitely a must-see annual holiday movie for me!



2022 Winter Expo

Kyndra Peterson
Co-Editor-in-Chief

The 2022 Winter Fine Arts Expo was a success at Gaffney High School!! The community came out to support the arts during this jolly and festive time of year! Attendees were able to warm their spirits with a feeling of musical nostalgia by many of the selections chosen for the event. The performances were held at Gaffney High School Auditorium at 6:30 p.m. on December 13th & 15th. Friend, family and community members attended the Winter Fine Arts Expo.

The sixth-grade bands performed on December 13th at Gaffney Middle School and Ewing Middle School. Directing Ewing Middle was the one and only Mrs. Jennifer Cantrell. She is an amazing educator who teaches the fundamentals of music to grades 6th-8th as well as assisting with the High School Band during marching season. The sixth grade band at Ewing Middle School performed "Blasts of the Season", with songs including "A Christmas Sleigh Ride" composed by Sandy Feldstein and John O'Reilly, "A Beginning Song Medley Arr" by Jennifer Cantrell, and the traditional "Jingle Bells". The 7th & 8th Grade band students performed on the 15th with "Carol of the Kings". Mekel Rogers arranged this, "Silent Night" arranged by Sandy Feldstein and John O'Reilly. "Santa the Barbadian" composed by Randall Standbridge.

Directing Gaffney Middle's concert band was the well-known and respected Mr. Elliot Rawls, who also teaches music to kids in grades 6th-8th. He assists with the High School band during competition season as well. Their music selection this year for the 6th-grade beginner's ensemble was the

"The Housetop", arranged by Michael Sweeney, and finally, "B B Christmas", arranged by Nicholas Forte. The Middle School Jazz Bands directed by Mr. Rawls were presenting those feel-good songs such as "Dashing Through The Snow arr.", by Andy Clark, "The First Noel", arranged by Peter Blair, and "Frosty The Snowman" arranged by Michael Sweeney. On December 15th, Gaffney Middles' 7th & 8th grade advanced band selections captivated the audience with the feature songs: "Do You Hear What I Hear", "A Holly Jolly Christmas", and "Carol Of The Bells".

Taking center stage on December 13th, was Ewing Middle School's chorus group. Mrs. Lori Allison, whom has devoted her career to teaching choral groups, had her students on brand new stands thanks to the district investing more funding into the chorus programs at Gaffney. The future of the Fine Arts caroled their hearts out for the following selections: "We Need a Little Christmas" arranged by Lori Allison, "Whisper", composed by Jay Althouse and "Christmas Time is Here", by Vince Guaraldi.

The second choral group to bless our ears was presented on the stage of the Winter Fine Arts Expo. It was the Gaffney middle school Chorus group led and directed by Mrs. Ellen Owens, who teaches grades 6th-8th at Gaffney Middle School. Music selections chosen for the Christmas event were the following oh-so-merry picks: "Christmas Jubilation", written by Mike Wilson, "African Noel", arranged by Dave and Jean Perry, and "Have A Happy, Happy Holiday", written by Teresa Jennings.



-vanced Jazz ensemble performed on the 13th. Unlike previous years, this was the first time in the Winter Expo; Mr. Francis Norris conducted "G-Town". The jazz band will be showcasing "Holly Jolly" jazz arrangements such as "Chattanooga Choo Choo", arranged by Mike Story, "No L in Swing", also arrange by Mike Story, "Who Let The Elves Out Arr.", by Victor Lopez, "Deck The Halls With Bones and Saxes", composed by Andy Clark, and "Hooked on Holidays", composed by Victor Lopez. This jazz group is sure to blow your socks off this holiday season. These students chose to be part of a more advanced jazz band in an effort to have the ability to perform at a

