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APRIL 21, 2014
Volume 93, Issue #12
pioneer.cooper.edu

INTERVIEW WITH DEVORA NAJJAR (ChE '16), STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

JOSEPH T. COLONEL (EE '15), CAROLINE YU (EE '15), & SAIMON SHARIF (ChE '15)

The Cooper Pioneer sat down with Devora Najjar (ChE '16) to discuss her role as the Student Representative to the Board of Trustees.

The Cooper Pioneer: How many Board of Trustee meetings have you attended so far?
Devora Najjar: Two plus one over the phone. That wasn't an official meeting, but it was where they actually decided on tuition.

TCP: When were these meetings?
DN: First one was December 8th. The official meetings are Wednesdays. The impromptu meeting was a Friday – January 10th. The one in March was mid-March, March 12th. There are four scheduled Trustee meetings a year – March, June, September, December.

TCP: Can you describe the atmosphere of these meetings?
DN: The first one I was super scared about because I had no idea what it was going to be like and I was pretty convinced that is was just an appeasement position. I thought, “okay, I'm going to get there and just sit around and they're going to do their business.” But then I got in there and everyone was all really welcoming and genuinely excited about the position.

The head of the table was Francois [de Menil, the Vice Chairman], Jamshed [Bharucha], Mark [Epstein,

Chairman Emeritus], Richard [Lincer, Chairman of the Board], and me. I was right up next to Rich, who moderates the conversation because he's the chairman. He let me speak whenever I wanted to, which was really cool. I didn't think I was going to have that ability.

I had no idea how to prepare for the meetings. I knew we were going to talk about tuition, but as much as I prepared for it you can't prepare a thing you're going to say. You don't know how the conversation is going to go - what questions they're going to ask you, what aspects they're going to focus on... but it was really cool because in the middle they said “what about the students...” And I was like “Hey! Guess what! I am a student, so I can try and let you know what they would think!” I really had the ability to actually be a voice for students.

TCP: How long were they generally?
DN: The meetings typically went from 8:30 in the morning to 1:30 in the afternoon. There is the general meeting with the board along with any outside parties that were called in to speak or for consultations on matters and such, then they have executive meetings with the board and the president and then an executive meeting without president. These parts of the meetings are generally to discuss matters that can't



Photo Credit: Vincent Wai Him Hui (Arch '15)

be discussed in the general meeting because of a conflict of interest or sensitivity of the material being discussed.

TCP: Were you comfortable at the meetings? i.e. did you feel that other members of the board respected your opinion?
DN: Yeah – it was interesting, one of the questions they asked me in the interview was something like “So do you feel intimidated by old men?” And even though there are a lot of things wrong with that question and I was kind of confused by it at first, after being in the first meeting I realized that it is such a legitimate question in the sense that it really is important that the student rep is totally comfortable speaking to the board members. I'm not scared to say, “ok, can you clarify your statement because

I don't understand this vague thing.” I'm not afraid to make a statement for the students to the board that I know they might not want to hear. In terms of feedback from the board members after the first meeting, the most frequent comment I got from them was “wow I'm so impressed with your speaking. You were so level headed when you were talking. You are so brave to be doing this.” And I was pretty satisfied with that response because I was so scared that I would mess up saying something or I wouldn't be clear enough or something would slip out, and the board members would just write me off. And Kevin Slavin (Art '95) called me a rockstar, which may or may not be one of the highlights of my life.

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GREEN ROOFS

YARA ELBOROLOS (CE '14)

As the United States and the world become more aware of the negative effects human actions are having on the planet, many steps, such as building green roofs, are being taken in order to reduce these effects. Modern green roofs are designed to be made up of several layers, for example a root barrier to protect the roof from the roots, and the drainage mat to help in draining water. There are several benefits to green roofs, such as water management to save the water, runoff delay to reduce pressure on the pipes and sewer systems, thermal regulation to regulate the temperature change and reduction of solar radiation. The main disadvantage is the initial cost,

but because of many benefits, it becomes profitable after a couple of years or so. Due to these benefits of having green roof, the Javits Center located on 34th street and 11th avenue, which is one of the biggest convention center in the country, has begun installing a green roof. Cooper Union, under the advisement of Professor Cataldo, and Drexel University, under the advisement of Professor Montalto, who is a former student of Professor Cataldo, are working together to do a study on the green roof to analyze the benefits of the green roof for over a year. A metal drainage system is being installed to determine how much water

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APRIL ESC OPEN MEETING

CAROLINE YU (EE '15)

This past Monday, April 14th, the Engineering Student Council held an open meeting. Dean Dahlberg attended the meeting to give an update on the engineering school. She began her update by mentioning the press release that gave the statistics on the students admitted to Cooper this year. The big question is yield, which will be answered on May 1st when the accepted students have to notify Cooper whether they will attending this fall or not.

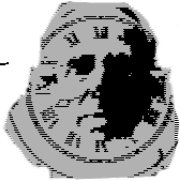
Faculty searches for replacement positions are being conducting in various departments. The physics department is looking for two full-time professors. The elec-

trical engineering department has conducted interviews for a full-time position. The chemistry department brought in five people to interview and the computer science faculty search is being put on hold until a new computer science program is fully developed. A second associate dean position will allow for further research and development in graduate programs.

Dean Dahlberg shared the four main programs she has been focusing on. The first is the pre-college program. The second is the Master's degree programs. The third is connecting with companies and have them sponsor student-

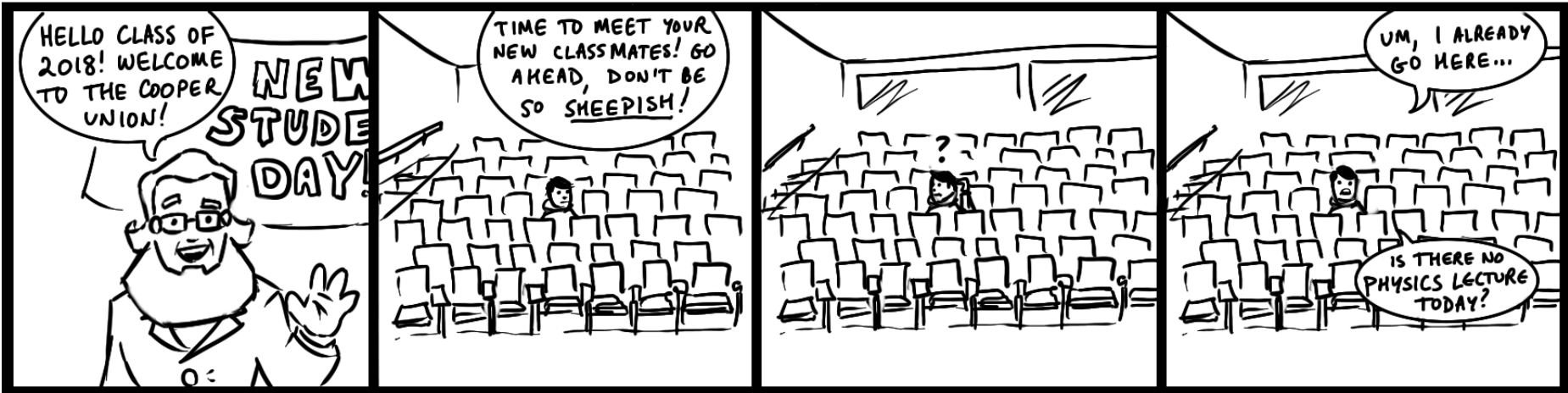
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Peter Cooper
IN THE FUTURE



JAKE POTTER (ME '16)

EPISODE FIFTEEN



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It was really important for me to know that the board respected me, because if they didn’t want to listen to my opinion or think I was someone they felt comfortable to approach for a discussion, it would invalidate the whole point of the student rep position in the first place.

TCP: What is your affiliation with Free Cooper Union?
DN: I joined Free Cooper in December of 2012 after the first lock-in. I remember seeing the artists attacking Jamshed one day and I was so furious. I thought, “What the heck? How could they do that to him? Obviously it’s not his fault - this is not the financial mess he got us in.” But I had friends in the art school that told me to come to a [Free Cooper] meeting and see what it’s about. I loved this school and even if I didn’t know if I loved the way they were going about it, I did agree with what they were fighting for. So I went to a meeting. Then I went to more meetings. I got way more informed on the situation, and found out things I never knew. I got a lot of new and different perspectives on the issue, which helped me get a really great broad picture of everything that happened and was happening and could happen. I made a ton of new friends from all different parts of the school. I learned a lot about non-violent actions and actions in general, group dynamics, and safe spaces – all things that are good to know just being a human being in the world. Proper group building and the kinds of things they should be teaching you in CONNECT workshop.

It was really clear to me that the core of the movement was about fighting for this school and Peter Cooper’s legacy and for the ideals of free education. And that was something that I believed in strongly. There were a lot of people whom I know that didn’t get involved with the movement because they didn’t agree with one or two aspects of the movement. People got caught up in the details and lost sight of the bigger picture, which was free education.

There weren’t that many engineers actively involved [in Free Cooper] so I tried to be a liaison, at least for my friends. That was important to me because I knew that even if they were not going to be a part of it they knew they had someone to go to talk to about everything that is going on, and why it’s going on, and someone who they can go with who they feel comfortable with if they want to get more involved.

I went to meetings in the spring. I went to the meetings about the second occupy – Jamshed’s office. There were jobs given out and I was part

of the people who pulled down the black banners that they threw out the windows. And then I occupied through the end of school and then on and off throughout the summer when I had the ability to be in the city. It was a really cool experience – it was really nice to feel like I was doing something to show that we weren’t going to let this school go down without a fight. In a really selfish way, I tried to show how much I cared about this school. I did all of this so that no matter what happened, I would know that I didn’t stand by idly while this was going on.

TCP: What has been the most surprising thing you’ve learned (which you can share with us) during one of these meetings?
DN: Their lunches aren’t so fancy – they’re just sandwiches and pasta salad and salad.
TCP: What other meetings do you attend or hold to talk about the Board of Trustees meetings?
DN: I had one meeting in the Great Hall before the first [Board of Trustees] meeting. I also met with all the student councils beforehand. I talked to anyone I could see to make sure I had people’s ideas and thoughts on things and what they would negotiate for, what they wouldn’t negotiate for, what they would be willing to cut, what they wouldn’t be willing to cut. Because there was no way to guess for sure where the conversation would go, I wanted to have all of my bases covered.

Since the first board meeting, I’ve been going to the Joint Student Council meetings to hear what’s up with them and also to let them know what’s going on the board end of things as well as going to individual student council meetings. In addition, after break before the second board meeting I held another forum for the students to talk about what happened at the meeting, get a sense of the student sentiment toward everything that had gone down, and make sure I knew what was important to the student at this point in time so I could properly express that to the trustees.

TCP: How do you feel about student response to your position?
DN: It’s funny because I wasn’t even going to run in the first place because DeVonn [C Francis Art ‘15] was running, Harry [Cullen BSE ‘15] was running – and I thought cool, good people – I wanted them to represent me. Then we wanted to have three Free Cooper kids on the ballot, but things fell apart and Harry couldn’t run so it was just me and DeVonn. I thought, “I don’t want to fight against you because I wanted you to represent me in the first place” and then the Board

freaked out because I wanted to drop out. Then we had the JSC vote but then that didn’t work so I was stuck doing the interview.

In the interview I was like “Hey, you should pick DeVonn.” But then I got a call from Rich Lincer and he’s like, “Hey, I have some news for you I think you’ll be happy about” and I was like “great you picked DeVonn that’s awesome!” and then he kept talking and then he was like “No, no we picked you.” I told him how would I be happy that I asked you to pick DeVonn. But then I was like, ugh, darn, everyone’s going to be pissed now, I don’t want to deal with this, and then things were on the internet and this guy who doesn’t even know me wrote a comment on Unify or Save Cooper that was a list of six or seven reasons why they picked me over DeVonn and it was all really negative. I was kind of upset because I think DeVonn is a better qualified candidate than I am no question, but that doesn’t mean I’m totally unqualified.

But I’ve gotten good responses from everyone – they seem to be cool with it and me and everything. I think they appreciate how much I try and know what’s going on in all of the schools. And I’m like a five foot tall thing with weird sweaters and crazy hair, so I think people aren’t too intimidated to just come up to me and say “Hey, wanted to talk to you about something that’s going on.” It’s also great because I’m officially at the center of all of the weird Cooper conspiracy gossip since everyone comes to me looking to see if everything they’ve heard is true.

This position is a really huge responsibility I didn’t expect to have it but it’s really great for me because now I feel morally obligated to be friends with everyone in the school,

which I felt before but it’s less creepy now. Now I have the excuse to say, “Can I please be part of your life because technically I serve you.”

And that’s something I think we need more of in our community. I think everyone should introduce themselves in the elevators. A lot of Cooper kids don’t approach other Cooper kids in that capacity.

But it’s also a little hard for me to properly get student response and student involvement in general. Cooper kids don’t always come to meetings – that’s a fact. Cooper kids are generally late to things – that’s a fact. Cooper kids are really busy with their stuff – that’s a fact. So me being in charge of the students is just trying to catch students here and there because I know that there will never be a good time for a group forum where a lot of people from different parts of the school can all make it.

TCP: Is there anything you would like to tell the students?
DN: I love the students at Cooper Union. They are the lights of my life. Like for real, I really like you all. I learn so much from you. You help expand my view of the world and I feel like a more enriched person because of that. I would tell them that I hope they all come to me with all of their questions and concerns and I’ll try to get them addressed. It’s intimidating to have this position but I hope that I can do right by everyone. I would also say that we are at this turning point right now and it’s imperative that we pass the legacy of the school to the incoming classes at Cooper – we can’t just have the alumni fighting once the current freshmen leave. I want to have a larger discussion with students how we can bring about that kind of culture within the community and properly educate the incoming freshmen and not isolate them.

will be conducted for at least a year or two to get an accurate idea of the green roof effects. The projects like this are springing up all over the city and it’s these small steps that will help the world become much more sustainable by both helping the environment and being more efficient with resources. ♦

buildings around the city, and lastly, generating a non-traditional computer science program that focuses on human and computer interaction, analytics, big data, visualization and informatics.

Other topics that were covered in the open meeting included the calls made to admitted students, an update on the peer mentorship program, an update on the faculty auction, and an update on the logistics of submitting faculty compliments. ♦



Photo Credit: Lauren Bernales (EE ‘15)

COOPERNOVA PLACES FIRST

CAROLINE YU (EE ‘15)

On April 12th, Cooper Union’s CooperNova Dance team competed in the Empire State Championship, where they placed first. The performance was choreographed to a remix of Animals and Bass Down Low, entitled “Animals Down Low.”

Danielle Verdecchia (CE ‘13), a Cooper alumnus and avid dancer, helped choreograph the dance routine. I asked her about the development of preparing for the competition: “CooperNova started thinking about performing in competitions at the end of the 2012-2013 school year. Since the group had only just been formed that year, the dancers were content with doing performances solely at school

based functions and sports events. As the group became more comfortable dancing together and experiencing each member’s unique style, we decided that a competition would be a great next step for the team: it would give us the opportunity to meet new people, experience different types of dance (hip-hop, cheer, lyrical, etc. are styles included in most competitions), and improve on our skills... When choreographing a hip-hop piece, the music is the most important thing: a good beat and move-inspiring lyrics are key when choosing a song for a routine. Early on in the process, I usually put the song I’ve chosen on repeat and listen to it for a few hours,

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LECTURE BY ARCHEOLOGIST AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVIST, DR. MONICA HANNA

ANAMIKA SINGH (Art ‘17)

On April 10th, 2014 The Cooper Union proudly hosted the Award Lecture and Dinner in honor of Dr. Monica Hanna, an Egyptologist who has earned the Safe Beacon Award for her efforts in the preservation of Egyptian archeological antiquities and sites. The night began with welcoming remarks by Lucille A. Roussin, Ph. D., J.D. and the introduction of Dr. Monica Hanna by the president of The American Research Center in Egypt Sameh Iskander, Ph. D.

Dr. Monica Hanna developed a passion for Egyptian history early in childhood. Inspired by her adventures in Egyptian museums and her interactions with archeologists and restoration artists, she pursed further studies in the subject, eventually attaining a Ph. D. as an Egyptologists. When Dr. Hanna was pursuing post doctorate studies in Berlin, revolution broke out in Egypt. As the revolution quickly became the catalyst for the looting and destruction of Egypt’s historical sites and artifacts, Dr. Hanna returned to her homeland determined to protect Egypt’s history. Since, Dr. Hanna has spearheaded massive efforts to protect archeological sites and antiq-

uities which are a target not only for looters who pillage and dig holes in search for artifacts to be sold in the black market but also “land mafias” and urban development.

According to knowledge acquired by Dr. Hanna and her team in the past several years much of the destruction has occurred due to locals and “land mafias” who attempt to destroy and deface archeological sites in order to “erase the collective memory” of the location and use the land for a variety of other purposes. These sites, which are wrongfully seen as a no mans land, have become targets for destruction. Scholars and archeologists are concerned not only for the loss and destruction of these sites but also for the impact it may have on Egypt’s economy in which tourism plays a significant role. Dr. Hanna has managed to save various sites due to efforts through social media and volunteer work. For her efforts and passion Dr. Monica Hanna received the Safe Beacon Award. The Safe Beacon Award was founded in 2006 to recognize achievement in raising public awareness about the destruction of cultural and historical heritage. ♦

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mostly just goofing around and letting the rhythm sync in. All it takes is one starting move to get a routine started: once I have that, the rest of the moves fall into place. I like to incorporate dramatic movements during sudden changes in the music, and ripple-effect choreography in sections that would normally seem more mundane. A good way to keep things interesting is to change routines and keep the dancers on their toes-if they're constantly entertaining the audience, then they are doing their job! It's always important to choreograph a piece section by section-if you try to do the whole thing

in one shot, the movement begins to look the same and unoriginal. Doing a piece in sections makes each part that you're doing new to you in that moment, and keeps your mind fresh with ideas.”

CooperNova will be competing at “The U.S. Finals” competition on May 3rd in Providence, Rhode Island. The team will be in the Senior Hip Hop Division. Most of the teams that CooperNova would compete against are either other college dance or studio teams. Verdecchia said that the team is “very excited to compete and will hopefully continue this legacy on in future years of CooperNova!” ♦

FOUNDER’S DAY 2014: THE PETER COOPER BLOCK PARTY

CHAE JEONG (ChE ‘16)

On Sunday, April 13th, 2014, The Cooper Union Alumni Association held The Peter Cooper Block Party for Founder’s Day 2014. The event occurred in two sessions, the first being The Awards Ceremony from 10:00 PM to 1:00 PM in the Great Hall. During this time, The Cooper Union Alumni Association presented awards that honored alumni achievements in art, architecture, and engineering, amongst other recognitions of service and dedication. This year, award recipients were the following:

- Jay Moskowitz (Phy ‘70), for the Gano Dunn Award for Engineering
- Julian Laverdiere (Art ‘93) and Augusta Savage (Art ‘25) for the Augustus Saint Gaudus Award for Art
- Leslie Gill (A ‘82), for the John Q Hejduk Award for Architecture
- Patricia Buckley Moss (Art ‘55), for the Peter Cooper Public Service Award
- Sean Cusack (BSE ‘98), for the Alumnus of the Year Award

In addition:

- Henry Chapman (Art ‘10), Alexis Lenza (CE ‘05) and

Victoria Sobel (Art ‘13) were recognized as the Young Alumni of the Year.

- Special Recognition for Extraordinary Service was given to Barry Drogin (EE ‘83/MEE ‘86), Michael Borkowsky (ME ‘61), and Jeffrey Gural.

Following the Awards Ceremony was the Street Fair on Astor Place (between Broadway and Lafayette) from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The Street Fair featured a variety of activities, food stands, and showcase booths. Among those was the Inventor’s Row, a series of booths that presented the work of modern day inventors. At 2:30 PM, these inventors took part in an Inventor’s Panel where they discussed the process of invention and innovation. Amidst all of the activity on Astor Place, The Coopertones, The CooperNova Dance Team, and the Daddy Long Legs Blues Band performed on the Jeff Gural Stage. At 3:00 PM, The Peter Cooper Jello Challenge was held and the Street Fair event concluded with the Tealightful Raffle Drawing at 4:00 PM. ♦



COOPER UNION VISITS IIT BOMBAY

CAROLINE YU (EE ‘15)

During Cooper Union’s spring break, President Bhattacharya, Dean Dahlberg, and Professor Tzavelis travelled to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay. The Cooper Union and IIT Bombay are starting a new student exchange program. The purpose of the trip was to enable Cooper faculty to get to know the IIT Bombay faculty and students as well as to see their campus.

I asked Dean Dahlberg how it felt to travel to India as a group representing Cooper: “It was fun traveling as a group that represented Cooper...An IIT Bombay alum, Ron Mehta traveled with us. Ron is a generous sponsor who will provide travel support for both Cooper and IIT Bombay exchange students in the first year of the program. It was fun having Ron show us around his alma mater and reminisce about his time as an undergraduate at IIT

Bombay. Everyone at IIT Bombay treated us very well. They were very curious about the environment at Cooper Union and in New York City. Our guides showed us classrooms, labs, student housing and cafeteria. They have a lot of space and equipment. They have an impressive incubator that houses student startup companies. They just opened up a tinker’s space. They invited us to participate in the awarding of students who won an app development contest.”

Her favorite memory of the trip was touring the Aakash project where the Indian government is sponsoring the development of a \$49 tablet pc called Aakash. The university houses a group of developers to meet India’s goal to educate hundreds of thousands of software professionals. Dean Dahlberg also enjoyed a meeting with IIT Bombay students interested in visiting

Cooper. She comments that in India “high school students must take a rigorous entrance exam to get into college. The IIT Bombay engineering programs admits only the top students from the over 500,000 students who take the required college entrance exam. The students are incredibly smart, hardworking and ambitious. They remind me of Cooper students!”

Professor Tzavelis noticed that the IIT students are all happy with the student activities. He was also impressed with their labs: “Their labs are much bigger than our labs...They had some old equipment but also the latest equipment – we even visited a nanotech lab which was state of the art. For civil engineering, they had the latest equipment like the ones we have. Their labs were 10 times bigger than ours!” The most apparent difference between Cooper and IIT is the student body size. At IIT, lab classes consist of 150-200 students. On the other hand, Professor Tzavelis noted that a major similarity between Cooper and IIT is the high

caliber of students in both schools. He was impressed by IIT students working very hard in groups just like the way students work at Cooper.

The greatest incentive to study abroad is having the chance to travel to a different country and experience the way of life in an entirely different environment. Professor Tzavelis strongly recommends that Cooper students – especially those who have never traveled out of the U.S. – to go visit IIT and see how people live outside of America: “This can be a life changing experience. It can motivate the student to do more for the society and for their profession. I strongly recommend that students go there for a semester.”

The deadline for the study abroad application has passed, but if you are interested in studying abroad to IIT and have not had the chance to check out the program, follow this link: <http://cooper.edu/engineering/global-studies/semester-exchange>. ♦



Photos provided by Dean Dahlberg

Photo Credit: Christine Huh (Arch ‘18)



CULTURE SHOW 2014: COOPER HUMOR

YARA ELBOROLOS (CE '14)

For a small school, Cooper happens to have a diverse community, and the Culture Show, run by SAS (South Asian Society), is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate this. On April 5, 2014, the Great Hall was filled with over a hundred people waiting to see their friends and classmates perform. With the hosts giving a little skit in between each of the acts, the audience

was kept entertained throughout. The acts were amazing as usual, demonstrating not just the culture but the talent of the Cooper Union student body. There were several vocal acts, showing off the beautiful voices of the students. Gospel Choir, started a couple of years ago, sang a couple of very inspirational songs with beautiful soulful voices. Peter Morfe (EE '16) did a solo act,

singing very graciously as usual and so did Ethan Lusterman (EE '14), who sang and played the guitar. A few of the members of Coopertones did a Disney Medley, singing some very popular songs from Disney movies such as Reflection from Mulan and a Whole New World from Aladdin. Sons of Pitches, four males from Coopertones, sang together for the last time in their Cooper career and they sang as beautifully as always. Coopertones was the last vocal act, singing several heart-warming songs and had

the audience very pleased. The Cooper Union Dramatic Society was also involved and they gave a wonderful preview filled with great acting of their upcoming play, Figaro, which is showing next week. Yo-Yo club also performed, using glow in the dark yoyos to start off their act, which had the audience in awe and ending with various cool tricks. Cooper Union students are also very diverse in their dancing skills, with Ballroom Dance doing very classical and elegant dances and Breakdance doing some amazing tricks

and routines. CooperNova had a wonderful dancing routine as well. Boys Dance was very amusing with their animal costumes, which they stripped off to Jason Derulo's Talk Dirty to the amusement of the audience. Girls Dance was great as well with people from all over and with a surprise guest of the male gender. The show ended with group dance, which had so many people that both the stage and the space in front of the stage were used. Their beautiful

costumes, great music, and interesting dances was the best way to end the night. But the show wasn't over, as SAS played a video dedicated to the Senior Class who helped them put the show together along the way. There were shirts being sold to help raise money for the costumes for the show and a lot of delicious Indian food served for free at the end of it. If you missed the culture show this year, make sure you get a chance to attend it next year. ♦

Photo Credit: Howie Chen (EE '16)

