

Issue I
Fall 2020



Fol-de-Rol

The newsletter of the
Yale Glee Club
Associates

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

Warmest greetings from the 160th Yale Glee Club!

This fall, of course, will be unlike any other in our long and storied history. Like choirs throughout the world, we will not be able to do many of the things we normally do – fall retreat at Silver Lake, in-person rehearsals in Hendrie, live performances will all have to wait for now.

But the students and I remain committed to keeping our community strong in any way we can.

We held auditions during the first week of classes (students submitted a video in advance, then scheduled online meetings with me and our officers) and I am absolutely thrilled with the calibre of the 34 new members we have welcomed into this year's group (98 singers strong). Students studying remotely can take part in the Glee Club this semester - our most distant will be raising her voice from Nairobi, Kenya!

At our first rehearsal, I spoke to the students - as I always do - about tradition, and how one of the most important things about our beloved tradition is that it is constantly reinventing itself. The Glee Club today is very different than in 1950 or 1861, and what always excites me about welcoming new members into our group is knowing that each of them will play a role in defining what we become in the future. The idea of reinvention rings even truer this year, when at least for now we can't meet in person. What is certain is that we will sing again together as we did before, and until that time, we will be patient and focus on what we can do.

So what can we do? We can make music together (even if it is virtual for now). We can learn. We can connect with one another. And we can serve our community.

These will be my guiding principals this fall as we chart this uncharted territory. There are sure to be ups and downs, but we will experience them together, and I truly believe the Glee Club will emerge from this experience stronger than ever before, full of gratitude for the gifts of music and each other.

Warmly,

Jeff

Notes from YGCA President



Who says “virtual” can’t be fun and incredibly musical?

The 159th Yale Glee Club and the Yale Glee Club Associates are out to prove it can be, in this most unusual singing year ahead. Participants may be either on campus, or far flung around the world, but they will find ways to make music together, going far beyond what we have come to think of as the standard virtual choir. And it will be exciting!

Jeff Douma and the YGCA Board have spent the summer brainstorming creative ideas to keep the Glee Club vibrant, and they have come up with a host of innovative ways to keep us all connected musically, from wherever we are. You are going to love being part of it.

There will be virtual concerts, often involving unusual collaborations (the School of Drama and others), and there will be performances of newly commissioned works. Look for regular live webinars with illustrious guests from the choral world, and projects designed to highlight social justice and to benefit New Haven organizations for young people, such as Music Haven (<https://www.musichavenct.org>) and the Music in Schools initiative. These are just a few of the many things that are beginning to take shape in this completely new Glee Club year.

Be on the lookout for updates from social media, email, and Fol-de-Rol, as these plans are all necessarily fluid right now. Without giving anything away, I can guarantee that there will be some wonderful surprises in store, including informal events to get us together socially during the coming months. Have you ever heard of “Sip ‘n Sing”? Probably not, but you will . . .

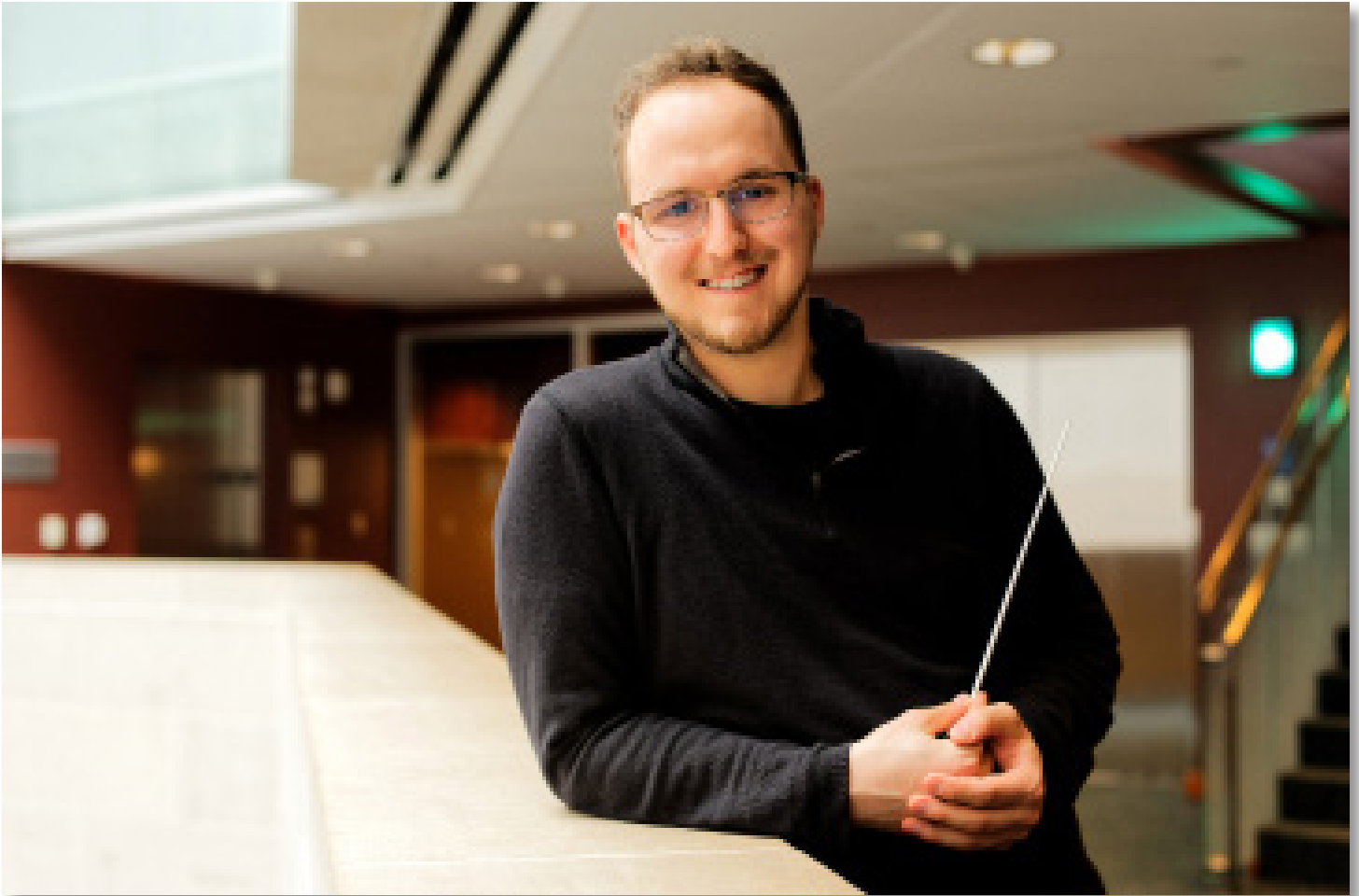
So, tune up your “devices” and join us. It will be so great to see you!

Yours in song,

Sarah

Seeking Ways to Unmute

A Conversation with Joe Lerangis, YGC Assistant Conductor



Joe Lerangis, D.M.A. Choral Conducting '25, joins the Glee Community this year as our Assistant Conductor. Hailing from New York City, they graduated from Kenyon College in 2012 with majors in Chinese, French, and Music. They later earned a Masters in Choral Conducting from Eastman, and are now pursuing a D.M.A. in Choral Conducting at the Yale School of Music. We spoke with Joe to learn more about their background and musical journey, and how they're feeling going into this unusual year. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Fol-de-Rol: When and how did you get involved in music?

Joe Lerangis: I've studied piano since I was 5. The public schools in New York don't have great choirs, so I played cello in orchestra and totally eschewed anything choral until I got to college. My brother was involved in choir and a cappella groups at Kenyon. I followed in his footsteps, and ended up being president of the choir and music director of an a cappella group when I was a senior. I didn't start doing the music major until halfway through college, when I thought, *why don't I try to take this a bit more seriously?*

FdR: How did you become interested in choral conducting?

JL: At Kenyon, we had a 44-person chamber singers group that I sang in all four years, and was the assistant conductor for my junior and senior year. That was my heaviest dose of choral music. In between undergrad and my masters at Eastman, I spent three years teaching at a secondary international school in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. I was tasked with starting a music program in this school from the ground up. They wanted to center it around band, so I focused a lot on teaching band instruments. Then, we started the choir program and the orchestra program, and before I knew it I was teaching 14 different instruments a day. From there, I applied to the masters in choral conducting at Eastman, and went there. Then directly from Eastman, I applied for the doctorate here and came straight from Eastman to Yale.

FdR: Who's your favorite composer, and why?

JL: That's really hard. Brahms was the first composer where my jaw dropped, and I was like, *how is this so beautiful?* I'm definitely a trashy Brahms fan. But my research for the D.M.A. surrounds Fanny Hensel, the older sister of Felix Mendelssohn. I think she's really really cool. When you have someone like Fanny Hensel who is left out of elite circles and is not allowed to publish, and you look at her work, you realize she was doing some incredibly innovative things—perhaps because she was left outside of the critics' eye. She wasn't being reviewed—she was running concerts in her family's estate. And in doing so, she became a curator of music. She was also a conductor, and she was also a coach and a teacher. If you didn't write the *Missa Solemnis*, history forgets about you. But it's people like Fanny Hensel who drive taste, who curate the direction music is going in, who conduct, who perform.

FdR: How are you feeling about being part of Glee this year, particularly since it's COVID times? What are you nervous about or excited about?

JL: I think my role this year is less of a director of the group, and more of a facilitator for this smaller group of students in the chamber choir who are interested in these projects. If everything is continually rehearsed on mute, I'm afraid of many many voices being muted for way too long. Both in a literal and in a figurative sense. So in racking my brain for ways that we can unmute, I've built in doing some short stories this semester, some narration, reading stories out loud to each other, talking about them. Hopefully once we start rehearsing music,

students will feel comfortable enough to unmute and sing through a couple lines, then pass the mic on to someone else to sing a couple lines. I think hearing each other is so important, because it does build the social side of the group. So I will be constantly trying to keep my ear to the ground in terms of how we can keep listening to each other, even when Zoom is inhibitory to it.

FdR: Can you speak a bit about the projects you have planned for the Chamber Singers this year? What made you choose to pursue them?

JL: Working backwards, the last project of the semester is Trevor Weston's *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*. The reason I chose that piece is because when you're looking for a *Magnificat* and a *Nunc Dimittis* for an advent concert, if you look online, you'll see 20 recordings of Bach's *Magnificat*, and 20 recordings of Schutz's *Magnificat*, and one or two recordings of Trevor Weston's *Magnificat*, what are you gonna program? You're gonna go with Bach, because you've been inundated with it. So we'll think of a compelling way to put together the Weston, see if we can tie in some of the narrative elements that are already baked into what the *Magnificat* is—the Canticum of Mary.

The central project is juxtaposing the collection of short stories by Jamaica Kincaid, *At the Bottom of the River*, with the art songs by Fanny Hensel. They're both talking about nature at their core. It's really interesting the way themes of nature are subverted, the way that subversion ties to elements of gender, or of coming to terms with yourself, or of being inhibited in some way. It'll be cool to work with the students and get everyone's opinions—are these similar? Jamaica Kincaid is an Antiguan-born writer—gardening writer and fiction writer—she teaches at Harvard, she's incredible, she's contemporary. And Fanny Hensel lived almost 200 years ago now, and came from a different place. She wasn't allowed to publish, but was from the upper middle class, was born Jewish and kept the faith until they were forced to convert. They both have unique backstories as creators and artists. It'll be cool to get everyone's thoughts on how their backgrounds tie in with what they've created.

The most pressing project is the one for the benefit concert. We're singing Modesta Bors' *Aqui te Amo*. It's a setting of the poem by Pablo Neruda, who is writing in the wake of the Spanish Influenza. The poem manages to find an intimate place of love and acceptance in what otherwise was a little bit of a hostile environment. I think that tracks a little bit with what this semester will be like for so many of us.

FdR: Anything else you wanted to add?

JL: Glee Club is a world class choir. I'm grateful to all of you for signing up for it this year, for staying involved, for being cognizant enough to know that it can't stop. We can't let something this important to people fall by the wayside. Throughout this year, we're all going to have to mitigate the gratification expectations. We don't have the privilege of walking into the Glee Club room and hearing that sound, that first downbeat of *woosh, this is what 99 voices together sound like*. We're not going to have that gratification. So I'm so grateful and astounded that so many students have signed up in spite of that.

New Member Profiles



Tarel Dennie

College: Pierson '24
Hometown: Snellville, Georgia
Voicepart: Tenor 2
Favorite thing about singing: "I love the energy that runs through your body and the connection that you feel to everyone in the ensemble."

Maya Khurana

College: Branford '24
Hometown: Los Angeles, California
Voicepart: Alto 1
Favorite thing about singing: "I love creating beautiful harmonies with my classmates."



Eliza Kravitz

College: Morse '23
Hometown: Washington, D.C.
Voicepart: Alto 1
Favorite thing about singing: "The camaraderie of making music together and the social and political power of music!"



John Nguyen

College: Davenport '24
Hometown: Saint Paul, Minnesota
Voicepart: Tenor 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Being part of a community, inspiring others, and sharing important messages."





Stephen Carrabino

College: Trumbull '23

Hometown: London, UK

Voicepart: Bass 1

Favorite thing about singing: "I am super passionate about it and it makes me really happy!!"

Mira Raju

College: Silliman '24

Hometown: Tucson, Arizona

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Favorite thing about singing: "The fact that I can make music no matter where I go!"



Chris Song



College: Murray '23

Hometown: Colleyville, Texas

Voicepart: Tenor 1

Favorite thing about singing: "I'm never bored in the shower."

Deven Kinney

College: Berkeley '24

Hometown: Allentown, New Jersey

Voicepart: Tenor 2

Favorite thing about singing: "I love how powerful the voice is as an instrument and the incredible sounds and music one can produce just by singing!"



Weston Kerekes



College: Silliman '24

Hometown: Santa Monica, California

Voicepart: Bass 1

Favorite thing about singing: "Feeling the energy with all the people around you."



Jackson Grady

College: Saybrook '23

Hometown: Covington, Georgia

Voicepart: Tenor 1

Favorite thing about singing: "I love the camaraderie it brings!"

Clay Thames

College: Davenport '22

Hometown: Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Voicepart: Bass 2

Favorite thing about singing: "The freedom it makes me feel from all other worldly attachments."



Melissa Adams

College: Silliman '24

Hometown: Hong Kong

Voicepart: Alto 2

Favorite thing about singing: "The joy and inner peace it brings to others!"

Sam Ahn

College: Berkeley '24

Hometown: Little Neck, New York

Voicepart: Tenor 1

Favorite thing about singing: "How it brings people together!"



Zosia Caes

College: Hopper '22

Hometown: New York City

Voicepart: Alto 2

Favorite thing about singing: "The long notes of a choir perfectly in tune."

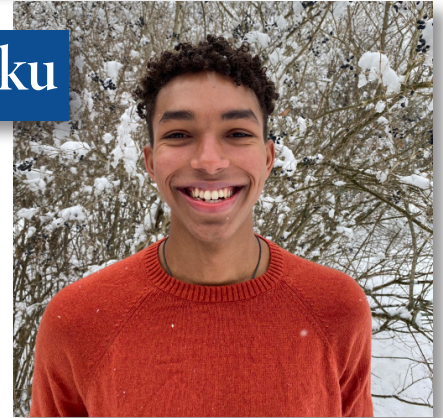


Catherine Alam-Nist

College: Hopper '23
Hometown: London, UK
Voicepart: Soprano 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Getting to revisit repertoire year after year, and having it mean something slightly different to you each time you encounter it."

Itembe Matiku

College: Silliman '24
Hometown: Manchester, Vermont
Voicepart: Bass 2
Favorite thing about singing: "It's fun!"

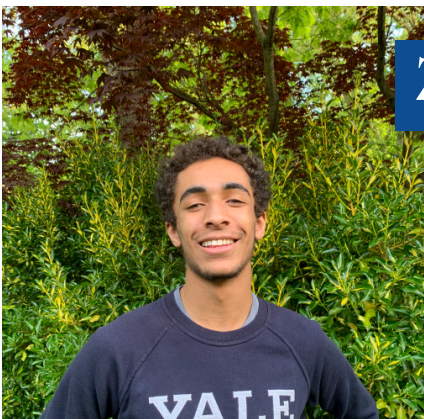


Neha Bhatt

College: Berkeley '21
Hometown: Maple Grove, Minnesota
Voicepart: Alto 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Getting to join forces with other music-lovers to create something totally new!"

Robert Crystal

College: Hopper '21
Hometown: New York City
Voicepart: Bass 2
Favorite thing about singing: "Every singing experience teaches me something new, both about the craft and what it means to everyone."



Zachary Redhead-Leconte

College: Saybrook '24
Hometown: Brooklyn, New York
Voicepart: Bass 2
Favorite thing about singing: "Above all else, it helps me to center myself by putting my all into my voice."



Iris Yang

College: TD '24

Hometown: Brookline, Massachusetts

Voicepart: Soprano 1

Favorite thing about singing: "The ability to express an incredible variety of emotion and remember events."

Lauren Marut

College: Davenport '24

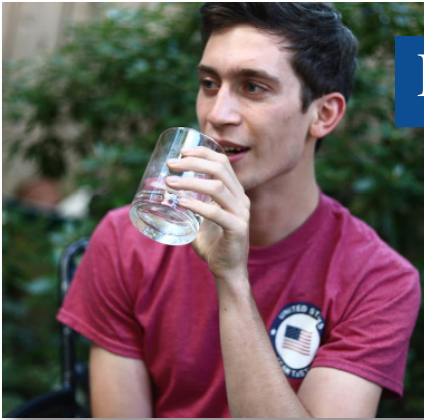
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Favorite thing about singing: "How it makes me feel!"



Richard Hausman



College: Franklin '24

Hometown: New York City

Voicepart: Bass 1

Favorite thing about singing: "Makes showering a lot more fun."

Megan Ruoro

College: Trumbull '24

Hometown: Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Voicepart: Alto 1

Favorite thing about singing: "Music is a universal language; no matter where you are or who you are singing with, it has the power to bring people together."



Isabelle Qian



College: Pierson '24

Hometown: Seattle, Washington

Voicepart: Soprano 2

Favorite thing about singing: "Singing never fails to make me feel happier!"



Anne Lin

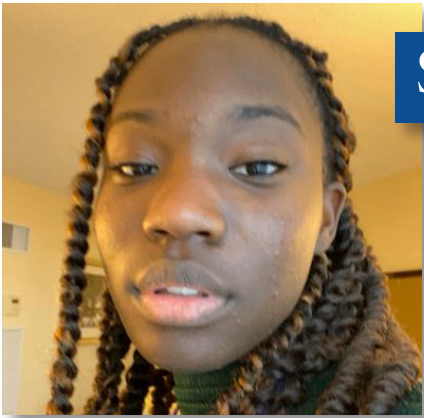
College: Trumbull '24
Hometown: Waycross, Georgia
Voicepart: Soprano 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Being able to sing, connect, and share a love of music with others."

Sebastian Li

College: JE '24
Hometown: Los Angeles, California
Voicepart: Bass 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Harmonizing."



Semilore Ora



College: TD '24
Hometown: Irvine, California
Voicepart: Alto 2
Favorite thing about singing: "Physical release of singing; singing with multiple people brings joy."

Gloria Lyu

College: Morse '23
Hometown: Shanxi, China & Philadelphia, PA
Voicepart: Alto 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Singing in harmony with the people you love is one of the most powerful things in the world."



Awuor Onguru



College: Berkeley '24
Hometown: Nairobi, Kenya
Voicepart: Alto 1
Favorite thing about singing: "Community!"

Hand In Hand Benefit Concert



HARVARD GLEE CLUB • PRINCETON GLEE CLUB • YALE GLEE CLUB

HAND IN HAND

A VIRTUAL BENEFIT CONCERT FOR EQUITY AND JUSTICE IN ARTS EDUCATION

OCTOBER 17, 2020 • 7 P.M.

BENEFIT RECIPIENTS: MUSIC HAVEN • CASTLE OF OUR SKINS • TRENTON HEAD START

For more than a century, the Glee Clubs of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale Universities have celebrated their deep friendship with a season of collaborative concerts during the fall semester. In honoring this tradition at a time of extraordinary change and challenge, the three Glee Clubs will present a virtual online benefit concert this October. Proceeds will benefit three non-profit organizations engaged in vitally important work for equity and justice in arts education: **Boston's Castle of our Skins, New Haven's Music Haven, and Trenton Head Start.** Each ensemble will share new and past performances by its singers, and the concert will end with a joint virtual performance of a new arrangement by Brandon Waddles of the Isley Brothers classic Caravan of Love commissioned for this concert.

YGC Statement of Solidarity

This past June, the Yale Glee Club issued a Statement of Solidarity in response to the growing momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement, and the national reckoning with racism, especially anti-Black racism, in this country. The Statement is as follows:

“As a musical organization that believes in the power of the arts and of singing in particular to build community, we stand in solidarity with the millions in our country and around the world who have spoken out in recent days against the senseless murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers, and against the long, painful legacy of institutionalized racism that remains woven into the fabric of our society and has resulted in countless injustices, named and unnamed, against Black people and other people of color. Black Lives Matter.

We join other arts organizations around the country in committing to singing works by creators of color in every public performance during the upcoming academic year and to maintaining and broadening our commitment to diversity in programming in future seasons.

As an organization cognizant of its history and institutional privilege, we commit to educating ourselves about the historical and cultural context of our repertoire and our role in singing it.

We recommit ourselves to maintaining, strengthening, and expanding our partnerships within our local community, to devoting significant financial resources in the upcoming year and in future years to these efforts, and to encouraging our alumni to donate to these efforts as well.

And we urge members of the Yale Glee Club community and the broader choral community to take action both as individuals and as organizations by donating, contacting your elected representatives, signing petitions, or getting involved in local organizations that promote justice, equity, and inclusion.”

The Glee Club swiftly moved to appoint an Anti-Racism Working Group composed of current YGC members in order to oversee our progress on the goals outlined in this Statement. For the past several months, this group has been in conversation about how we can apply these goals to the music we perform, each of our positionality with respect to that music, how we internally discuss the context of our repertoire, how we engage our audiences in that conversation, and how we can better serve our community. During last week's rehearsal on September 21, the working group brought these conversations to the Glee Club at large for the first time. We broke out into small groups in order to discuss terms such as "implicit bias," "cultural appropriation," "misogynoir," and "racial equity," and to apply them to our experience in YGC. We also discussed more general questions of how members envision a more just and equitable Glee Club. The Anti-Racism Working Group hopes to make these conversations an integral part of learning and understanding repertoire, and we want these conversations to guide the YGC experience more generally. We look forward to keeping the broader YGC community updated on the various other ways that YGC plans to incorporate anti-racist principles deeply into what we sing, who sings it, and how and why we sing it.

Sip & Sing Events!

In these virtual times, what could be better than a chance to reunite with YGC friends and enjoy a musical evening? This fall, the YGCA Board will be organizing a series of casual "Sip & Sing" events by decade. Keep an eye on your inbox for an invitation to a virtual event where you can catch up with your classmates and maybe even give "Zoom singing" a try! And if you're interested in helping to host an event for your decade, we're welcoming volunteers—please contact Marty Brennan or Rachel Wilf-Townsend for more details.

Marty Brennan: martybrenn@gmail.com

Rachel Wilf-Townsend: rachel.wilf@aya.yale.edu

Note from the Alumni Coordinators

Hi everyone!

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the Fol-de-Rol! Again, our names are Laura and Isa, and we're so excited for this year of fostering connections between the current Glee club and the broader Glee alumni community. It's been a wild beginning to an unusual year, and we're so thankful to y'all for staying tuned to and invested in our community as we navigate this unknown territory together.

Keep an eye out for information from us soon about our signature Alumni Mentorship Program! Alumni will be able to sign up and provide their personal and career interests, and we'll match alumni with students based on that information for a year (or more!) of mentorship and conversation. We'll be initiating this soon—get excited!

And as always, please contact us at laura.clapp@yale.edu and isabella.zou@yale.edu with any comments and suggestions about the newsletter, as well as any photos, memories, or other content for us to include.



Much love,

Laura + Isa