

# Campus voices blend together for 9th annual Acappalooza

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Opinions Editor

The audience's screams of delight rang clear up to the rafters of Whitley Auditorium Saturday night, as Elon University's a cappella community joined forces with other local and distant groups to put on Elon's ninth annual Acappalooza event.

This year's Acappalooza theme, VOICESONLY, remained ever-present as each group performed arrangements of multiple genres of music, using only the power of their voices to carry the tune.

Hosted by Sweet Signatures, Elon's only all-female ensemble, Acappalooza is an annual event on campus — one that strives to bring together Elon's a cappella community while reaching out to other university groups to come perform as well.

Junior Connor Stirland, president of Elon's all-male a cappella group, Rip Chord, said he believes students find Acappalooza appealing because it offers a refreshing change of pace from the style of music they normally hear.

"I think that a cappella is particularly big at Elon right now because we sing songs that people wouldn't necessarily hear on a day-to-day basis," Stirland said. "People like it because they like hearing the ways in which we can take something that already exists and make it sound really new and different."

The practice of incorporating new elements into pre-existing material was evident Saturday night, as many groups' arrangements were met with tumultuous applause and laughter from the audience. Some arrangements, such as the University of Maryland Generics' rendition of "Bottoms Up," incorporated simultaneous displays of rapping, singing, choreography and the occasional instance of booty-shaking.

In addition to hearing new interpretations of original music, Stirland said students usually come out to concerts to see their friends in a "come as you are" atmosphere.

"We always want to portray the fact that we're regular guys," Stirland said. "We're trying to show off the fact that we have talent and can create some really impressive sound."

And while Elon students may already be familiar with the musical stylings of



Freshman Elisabeth Jones performs Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" with Sweet Signatures, Elon's only all-female a cappella ensemble, March 10. GLORIA SO | Staff Photographer

Elon's a cappella groups, Acappalooza provided an opportunity for them to hear a cappella that hadn't been heard on campus before.

This year, four non-Elon a cappella ensembles made the trip to perform in Acappalooza, including North Carolina State University's Grains of Time, the UMD Generics, Swarthmore University's Sixteen Feet and Virginia Tech's award-winning Juxtaposition.

But senior Ashton Vincenty, president of Sweet Signatures, reinforced that competition between groups is not the primary goal of Acappalooza.

"We want to hold an event that provides a fun, non-competitive opportunity for different a cappella groups to share their talents," Vincenty said. "There are many competitions in the area, but we wanted to simply enjoy and celebrate each other."

Each year, Sweet Signatures actively seek to invite interested groups from both neighboring and distant universities to perform at Acappalooza, giving Elon



The University of Maryland Generics were one of four all-male groups that visited Elon's campus. GLORIA SO | Staff Photographer

students a chance to hear the musical stylings of other a cappella groups they may or may not have heard of before.

Vincenty said one of the primary goals of organizing each Acappalooza is to inspire a sense of community among a cappella ensembles along the East Coast.

"Collegiate a cappella is really a community," Vincenty said. "Not just between the groups on our campus, but between groups all around. We're all curious to hear different groups, styles, arrangements and (we) love seeing each other's hard work come together."

## All 'Signs' point to bright future for newest a cappella ensemble

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It has been almost a year since the formation of Vital Signs, Elon University's newest a cappella group. But for sophomore cofounders Ottavia Pomazon and Lexi Stones, that time has already allowed the group to make great strides.

"We've performed as a group multiple times now, so we're used to performing more," Pomazon said. "Because we have so many rehearsals under our belt, we're more confident in our own personal singing abilities."

The last year has been full of learning experiences for Vital Signs, not least of which was the process of actually becoming an official a cappella group on campus.

Pomazon and Stones, who were roommates last year, took an instant interest in Elon's a cappella ensembles. They both had performance experience from high school, and they were looking forward to continuing that experience in college.

But a poorly timed Leadership Fellows retreat caused the girls to miss the audition period for last year's wave of a cappella ensembles. Instead of waiting another year to get involved, Pomazon and Stones took on the immense task of creating their own ensemble.

"We started with nothing, just us two," Stones said. "And we had to form a group."

It was a project both of them were willing to undertake. It wasn't without its bumps in the road, though. Elon has a very specific procedure for the creation of new a cappella groups, and the process included paperwork, emails, meetings and pending approval from Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life.

Stones admitted her shared enthusiasm with Pomazon to get the ensemble off the ground may have slowed down the process. While they were planning their ideal concert venues, Elon was barely recognizing them as an official a cappella group.

"We kind of jumped the gun a little bit," Stones said. "That was the hardest thing — having to go through the red tape of the school."

But both girls agreed it was worth the payoff. Vital Signs is now approaching the one-year anniversary of its first-ever blind auditions, a system Pomazon called beneficial to the group.

"That way, we were judging purely on voice, not if they looked nervous or what they were wearing," Pomazon said. "It worked out perfectly, actually, that we had the perfect amount of people to put on parts so that we were perfectly balanced. That was kind of like fate."

Pomazon and Stones agreed fate has been good to them throughout the last year. Even on a small campus with three pre-existing a cappella

ensembles, Vital Signs has been able to come into its own with an equally talented group of students, Stones said.

"Adding a fourth group on campus was not an issue in that there are so many people turned away from a cappella," Stones said. "That's one of the biggest reasons that we started."

But the group thrives on more than talent. In the last several months, Vital Signs has shifted from a mixture of nervous auditioners to a true family, according to Stones.

"The thing that stands out to me the most is our group dynamic," Stones said. "I would definitely describe us as a family. I'm fully confident that next fall when we have auditions again, the people that we get are going to be entering a solid family."

Until then, Pomazon and Stones said they will be working with the group to make themselves stand out among the other a cappella ensembles. Stones, a strategic communications major, said she is especially focused on branding Vital Signs and expanding the group's audience.

"Even though our fan base has grown, there's still a lot of people who don't know about us," Stones said. "We want to grow and develop into something that people can remember."

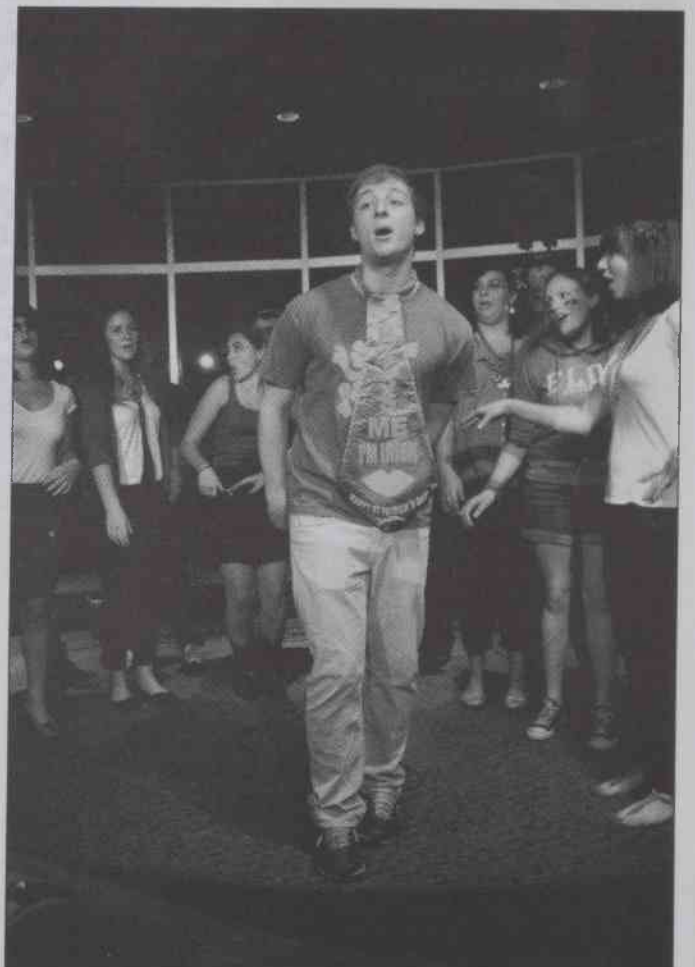
Pomazon said she has an equally positive outlook for the future.

"I know it sounds kind of

silly, but I'm really looking forward to coming back to Elon as an alum in 10 years with Lexi, and just watching a spring concert and knowing that the group is still going

on and that it's going to be at Elon for a long, long time," Pomazon said.

Vital Signs will hold its spring concert Friday, April 27 in Whitley Auditorium.



Junior Alex Howard performs "Lollipop" by Mika with Vital Signs March 8. SARA HUDAK | Staff Photographer