

THE Kraack-odile ROCK

From the pit to the podium: alum Tim Kraack composes a new moment for the choirs

RHYTHM AND REFLECTION. Director of Choirs Tim Kraack went to SPA in high school and now has come back to shape the mind and hearts of students through music. Below is a comparison of Kraack in his junior year and in 2025.



BATTLE ON. In this year's battle of the bands, Tim Kraack performed with other upper school faculty members.



PITCH PERFECT. Tim Kraack directs the Winter MS/US Choirs Concert in 2024.

By: Rohan Kavuru, Staff Writer

If you had told seventh-grade Tim Kraack that he would someday lead the very choir he was sitting in, his reaction would have been mixed.

"I probably would have been, like, 'cool, now I know what I'm gonna do,'" Kraack laughed, reflecting on his student days. However, he admits that he would have been skeptical as well. "I wasn't a very good singer when I was a kid. How could I be a choir teacher?"

Decades later, Kraack is doing just that. Following the 2022 retirement of beloved long-time director Anne Klus, Kraack stepped into the role

of Director of Choirs, completing a full circle from student musician to faculty leader. But he's not just filling a position; Kraack draws on his unique experience as an alum, professional composer, and multi-genre musician to re-energize the program he once called home.

It's a particular experience to return to your alma mater as a teacher. "It was like coming home," Kraack said, describing his gradual return to SPA, which started with accompanying choirs as a musician and working on musicals before taking on the full-time role.

Yet it's an experience that can feel surreal. German teacher Madeline Flom-Staab, an SPA graduate who was once Kraack's student, understands the feeling: "Have you heard of imposter syndrome?" she asked. "I still feel like a middle schooler as an adult. Sometimes I'll walk through a specific hallway and it will take me back to high school."

For Kraack, that connection to the past is a powerful tool. He sees a distinct "through line" he said, connecting his time as a student to his role as a teacher: it's the "really strong connection between teachers and students here."

"At a school where we have high expectations, to know that a teacher is pushing you because they believe in you is really important," Kraack said. "I think that is a strength of our community."

Empowerment and connection are key elements of his teaching focus. Staab vividly recalled Kraack's style from her time as his student.

"He was the first teacher that was so

authentically himself," she recalled. "He was silly a lot of the time. His musical talent was obvious, and he made mistakes in a way that felt like we could also make mistakes. He just created an environment that was very warm and welcoming and fun."

Ask Kraack to define his own teaching philosophy, and he distills it down to a single phrase: "High expectations, while giving grace for failure."



FLOWER-WORTHY FINISH Mr. Kraack smiles at the camera after another successful performance.

He explained that "I understand that while we strive to succeed, we will not always succeed, but that we can always build on wherever we're at."

This "subtle and empowering" approach, as Staab describes it, is already producing long-reaching results. "I hope (his current students) remember that they did some hard stuff," she said, "and they did it in a really cool and accessible way, and he taught it to them really well."

That new energy is more evident in the revival of a beloved SPA tradition: The Battle of the Bands.

When Kraack was a student, it was like an event that had lapsed for years but was a high school highlight. "It was like I looked forward to it the most out of anything, all year long," he said. After helping bring it back this year, the event's impact thrilled him.

"It was super fun and meaningful to everybody who was there," Kraack said. He sees the event as a vital space for student creativity that exists outside the formal curriculum, a chance for students to "get some buddies together and figure it out" on their own terms.

Staab, who said the Battle of the Bands had "just died out" when she was a student, agreed: "He has such a passion for it that it's really inspirational and infectious," she said. "It's cool to see it revamp." Kraack's passion for this kind of music is personal. While his training is in classical and jazz piano, his "fall back genre" is "punk music and hardcore leadership," as is his life as a professional composer, father of two, and performer. He's written an original musical, *The Logic Pit* (performed at SPA in 2023) and tries to compose or arrange a new piece for his choirs every year.

Ultimately, Kraack's return to SPA is about building on the community that shaped him. When he reflected on what he hopes his legacy might be, his focus became clear: "I hope that the kids had fun. Because the music was motivating," he said. "I hope they remember me, and that I believed in them and pushed them to do something they could feel proud of. I want us to all rise together."

12 # of years Tim Kraack has taught choir.

30 # of years Tim Kraack has played piano.

14 # of years Tim Kraack has been at SPA.

10 # of MS musicals Tim Kraack has music directed.

'08 year Tim Kraack decided he wanted to be a music teacher.

'05 Alumni/ae year for Tim Kraack, Class of 2005.



"I went to Minnetonka elementary school," Nolan Rosenberger ('28) said.

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