

# FROM PLAYS TO PODCASTS

On March 13, the Phoenix Players were only weeks away from performing *Around the World in Eight Plays* for the annual spring musical. When the decision was made to close SJP temporarily due to COVID-19, directors Ms. Nia Gipson, Dr. Daniel Borkowski, and Mr. Damian Shiner knew immediately that the students' dedication and hard work was in jeopardy—unless they shifted course.

That new course, chosen for its ability to work in a virtual setting, was inspired by the past. Turning to vintage radio broadcasts, the directors selected *War of the Worlds*, which was originally a radio play, and turned it into a decidedly 21st century medium: a podcast.

"We felt the timing was perfect for *War of the Worlds*," Dr. Borkowski said, "because the technologically advanced aliens are brought down by lowly pathogens: viruses and bacteria."

Throughout the spring, the students rehearsed twice a week over Zoom. They each recorded their lines individually and sent those recordings to Mr. Shiner, who assembled and edited the final production.

The transition to solely voice acting was revelatory for the students. Said **Jess Daher '21**, "Voice acting without being able to see my fellow actors is so different to normal acting on a stage. I am a very visual learner, and removing that visual aspect has been a challenge, but a fun one. This production has pushed me to think about my roles and characters in a different light."

**Brigid Duffy '22** agreed, saying, "Character work for me has mostly been accent based, as I was cast as one of the Announcers. For characters like the announcers, we learned how to do the transatlantic accent, because the original *War of the Worlds Radio Show* took place when the transatlantic accent was popular. I've learned that when rehearsing for radio plays,



it's a lot more important to concentrate on how you'll sound to the listener. When we started, my Announcer was a blank slate; there was no indication of a personality, and no real emotions that you could pick up just from reading the lines. Now, towards the end of the process, my character has a very energetic and cheerful personality that contradicts the serious, deadly situation at hand."

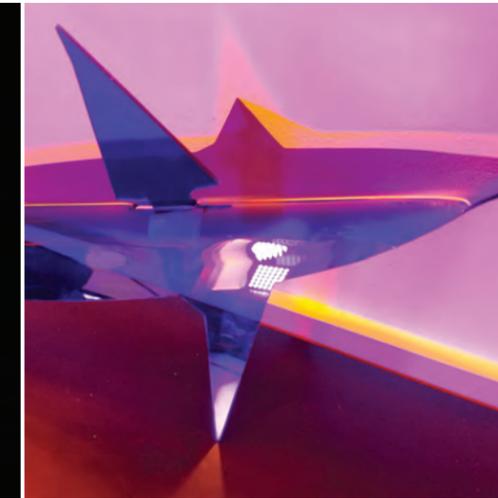
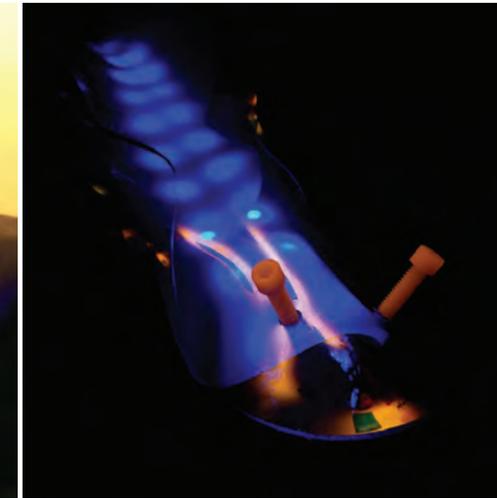
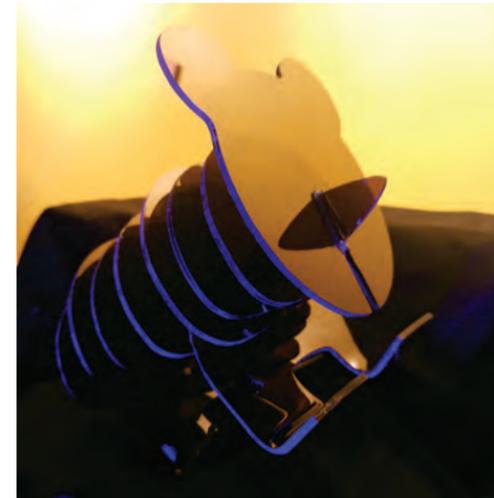
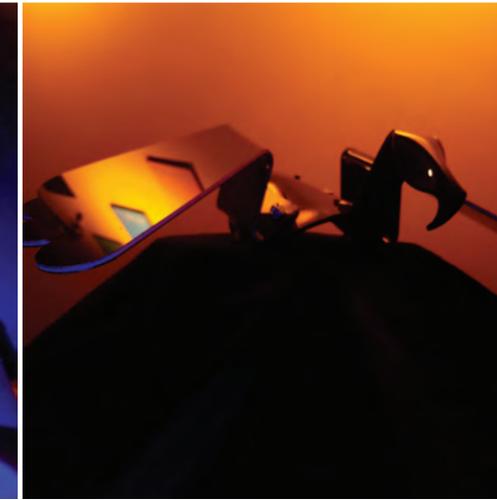
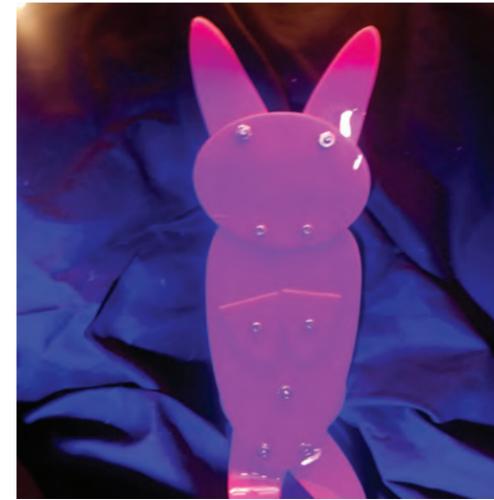
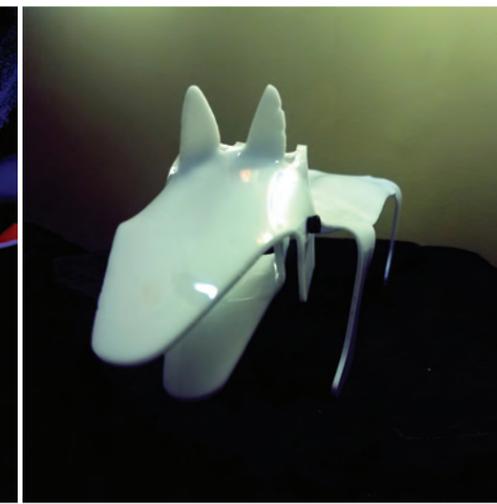
Dr. Borkowski added that being unable to rely on gestures and movement, as they would on a stage in a live production, forced the actors to push themselves to elevate their vocal performances.

For **Annabelle Pappas '22**, the absence of the physical setting of a theater proved to be a hurdle. "At first, I didn't really think this would make much of a difference, but when we started rehearsing for the show, I realized just how difficult it is to give a scene the same amount of energy when you're not on stage," she said. "Overall, it has been really interesting to figure out new ways to put on a show when I don't have access to the same tools that I am used to having."

In addition to enjoying the new challenges associated with this style of production, Jess found comfort in continuing to work with her fellow actors and with the directors in the absence of a return to campus. "Seeing everyone on Zoom made me so happy," she said. "I missed my theater group so much and it's nice to stay together during this challenging time."

Brigid added, "It's great that our directors found a way to continue theater, even when we are social distancing."

Launched on June 9, 2020, the podcast is available on the SJP website at: <https://www.saintjosephprep.org/community/arts/phoenix-players> or you may simply scan the QR Code on the right.



## A VIRTUAL SHOWCASE

Launched on May 25, 2020, the gallery is available on the SJP website at: <https://sites.google.com/view/steam-show-2020/home> or you may simply scan the QR Code on the right.



Each spring, the walls of Saint Joseph Prep are adorned with a diverse array of visual art and science produced by the STEAM and Fine Arts classes throughout the year. This past spring, however, as the School was forced to close its campus, the walls remained bereft of this impressive display. Not to be deterred, the STEAM teachers, led by Ms. Nia Gipson, generously created a "virtual" gallery. As just a sample of the works included, these acrylic sculpture animals (pictured above) were developed in the Mechatronics class with a CNC machine and a heat gun.