

Liam O'Connor's Portfolio

Trinity Preparatory School



On September 8, 2017, Bennett O'Connor prepares for his first Hurricane and spray paints plywood he bolted to protect the windows of his home before the destruction of Irma plummets through Winter Park, Florida.



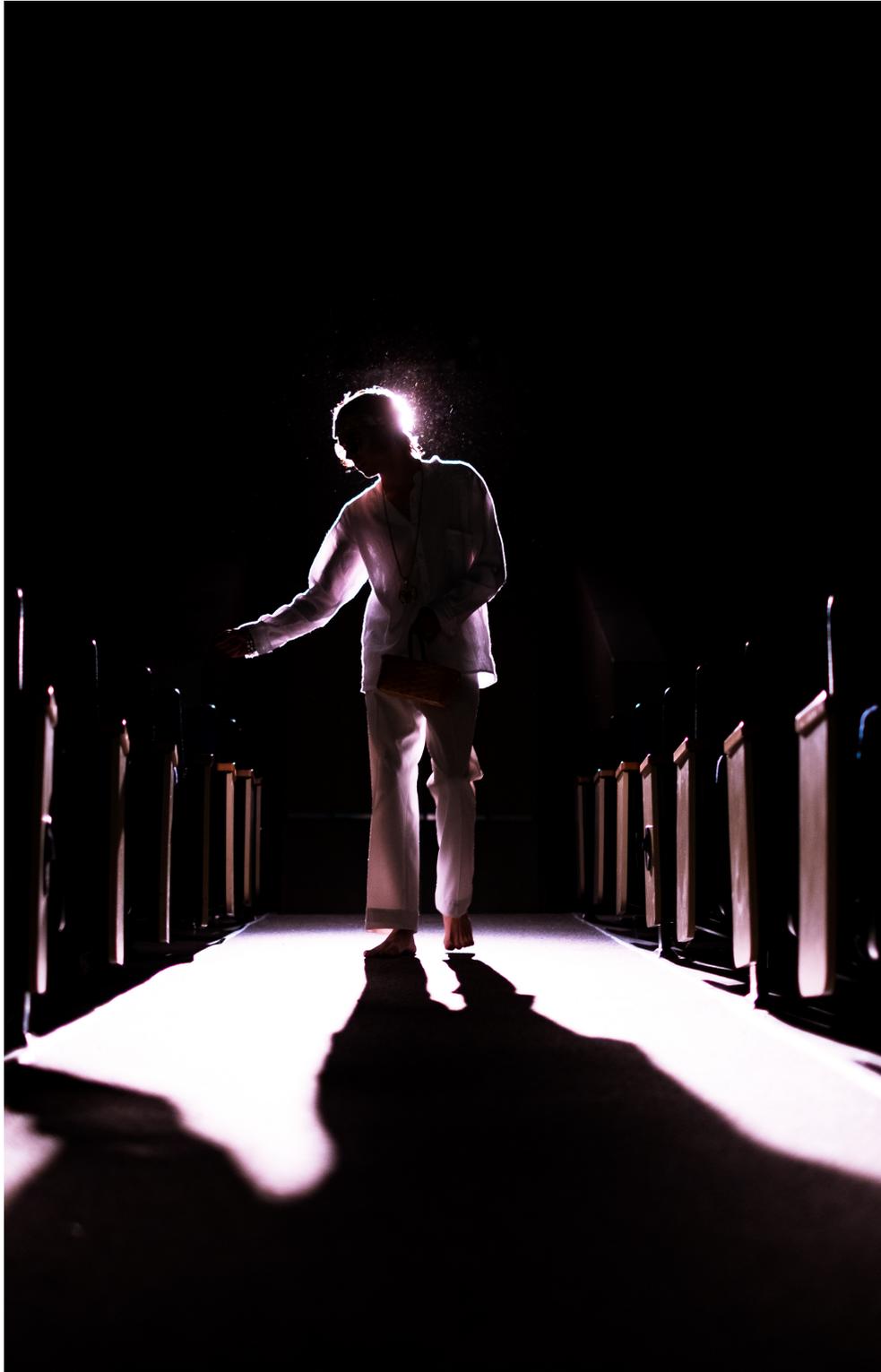
On October 21, 2017, Matthew Degtyar erupts from the water during his first place winning district race of the Boys 100 Yard Fly District Final. At the end of the season, Matt placed seventh in the State Finals Race in the same event.



Friday February 9, 2018, Junior Suzannah Evans laughs as the Trinity Prep Rowdy Crowd, a student fan group supporting Trinity Prep sports teams, make light of a dark moment; during the Regional Finals for Girls Varsity Soccer the lights went out at Bishop Moore and the Rowdy Crowd lifted their cellphones and sang their school's Alma Mater. Later that night, the girls team beat Bishop Moore in penalty kicks.



Olivia Miller sniffs flowers she was given for Valentine's Day on February 14, 2018. As Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday collided, Trinity Prep celebrated the two together, expressing a day of love and a day of repentance.



On March 7, 2018, Jake DiClemente—a high school senior—rehearsing during final dress for his High School Theatre debut in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Trinity Preparatory School in Winter Park, Fl.

NSPA

Trinity Prep Chi Rho

June 22, 2018

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I spent the entirety of my Senior Year with a camera dangling from my wrist waiting for a moment. Never knowing what that moment might bring, I'm on my toes anxious to discover what I uncover. The light is delicate; it defines the narrative and has the power to evoke emotions with one simple highlight. The shutter clicks after click, following my gut as it navigates my small, but mighty, Fujifilm XT2. Moments collide and eventually end; after every shoot, I like to review all the photos I've taken looking for the one that makes me stop.... stare and recount the events that happened just before the shutter triggered.

I can still taste the mixture of sweat and spray paint fumes. I had just received a notification from my school saying it was canceled to allow students and their families to prepare for the eminent hurricane coming through Central Florida—Irma. Luckily, my two little brothers, father, and I had just spent all Sunday morning boarding the windows of the house. My father busts out the spray paint so my brothers and I can become our inner graffiti artist; as always my camera is close by allowing me to document the moment. The clouds were coming in diffusing all the harsh light surrounding Bennett as he crouches to finish his 'taunt' towards the storm. Quickly adjusting the aperture to reflect the image in my mind, I release the shutter.

Fast forward a month, I'm screaming through my camera at the District Meet for the Boys and Girls Swimming and Diving. Water is flying everywhere: off the swimmers, back in the pool, onto the timers, soaking the enthusiastic fans. Matt Degtyar steps onto the block for his best event, Boys 100 Yard Fly. The weight of the 70-200mm has tired out my forearm. The tricky thing about taking photos of swimmers is that they are moving so fast that planning for a picture is near impossible—it's more of a shot in the dark—yet I'm feeling lucky. Focusing my lens in the middle of the lane, I pray to God he breathes in the frame, and it's in focus. I never had the chance to see if I got the shot until I was reviewing the meet in my car because as soon as Matt swam by, I had to race to the next lane for another race.

I was late. My heart was sinking. "Did I miss anything good? Ok, two minutes to halftime and it's still zero-zero. This is gonna be a good game." I remember being bummed walking up the stands to where the TPS Rowdy Crowd—a student group that goes to sporting

events to support classmates—was sitting; typically, I’m allowed to be on the track and take photos of the athletes, but this was a Regional event. FHSAA rules state that only athletes, coaches, and officials can be on the field. “What was I gonna do? My 35mm couldn’t reach the athletes from here.” As I take a few crowd shots, all the lights go out. We were in a blackout. Naturally, phone flashlights go up, and voices rise. But no one is screaming, we are singing. The Rowdy Crowd breaks out our school’s Alma Mater to support the Saints—the student—athletes. My silver lining was right in front of me.

Valentines Day and Ash Wednesday. That’s a weird mix. Right? Somehow they collided. One’s a day of love, and the other is a day of reverence. Now that I think of it, they do tie together. Christianity is all about loving everyone as your neighbor, and love is one of the highest feelings you can have towards someone. Love in this respect is not about romantic love but unconditional and unreserved love. Per tradition with Valentine’s Day, Key Club sells rosegrams to be handed out to people you love. You could feel it across campus. Love and warmth were in the air. I took many photos that day of Ash Wednesday and Valentine’s Day but separately not together; the one picture that combined the two entirely takes my breath away. This portrait reminds me of that day: the roses in the foreground, the cross on her forehead, and the joy in her eyes.

Theatre is my other passion. I love to sing and perform, but since I’m typically always on the stage, I never get the opportunity to take photos of the productions. What I love about taking photos for shows is the stage lighting—you never know what it’s going to be. The play this year was *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the lighting was superb: colorful gobos everywhere, fog drifting in from the wings, bright white lights keeping the entire stage lit. It was paradise but almost too easy. Then I hear the music of The Beatles and see the spotlights shine down the aisles. Through my viewfinder I see a Christlike Oberon meandering down the aisle. This was the challenge—less than twenty seconds to manipulate the harsh spotlight and capture the Deity that is Oberon.

The one thing you ask to write about is what I’ve learned this year. Well, I’m sitting in my chair listening to my mouse click as my eyes review the story of this year through the photos I’ve taken. I’m sifting through looking for those photos that give me a visceral reaction: some make me laugh, some make me nostalgic, others leave me numb thinking why can’t I connect to this photo. I see the moments. I know the story. I understand the growth. I’m reminded of my lessons: you don’t have to go farther than your backyard to get a powerful photo, planning before that shot helps tremendously, silver linings come to those who are flexible and wait, intertwining stories is awe-inspiring, and the absence of light is just as impressive. But my favorite lesson is you experience stories everywhere, but I can share them through my eyes.