

Heart and Soul

Six talented VSB students share how the performing arts have enriched their business education and shaped them personally and professionally—and they all echoed similar sentiments. You don’t have to sacrifice one for the other; in fact, they complement each other quite well.

Melody Hutchins ’26 VSB

Majors: Real Estate and Finance
Performing Arts: Violinist in Villanova Pastoral Musicians

During her first year at Villanova, Melody Hutchins ’26 VSB wasn’t involved in the arts. “I thought it would be best to focus on my academic studies,” says Melody, a dual Real Estate and Finance major who has been playing violin since she was 8 years old.

Her sophomore-year roommate was a member of Villanova Pastoral Musicians and encouraged Melody to join. “Thanks to her, I have been able to continue making music alongside wonderfully talented student musicians ever since,” Melody says. “Having not only a successful career but a passion is a core part of who I am and want to be after graduation.”

Plus, her participation in Villanova Pastoral Musicians has been an asset to her academic studies. An ensemble of about 40 undergraduate and graduate instrumentalists and singers, the Pastorals perform sacred music at weekly liturgies, special Masses and concerts throughout the year.

“We are often required to sight-read the pieces we play, making the ability to think and act quickly with confidence imperative to be successful in the group,” Melody says. “Likewise, in my classes, I often find myself coordinating group projects with time constraints that require efficient decision-making skills, and because of my experience in Pastorals, I can make decisions in groups with confidence.”

Shamar Long ’25 VSB

Major: Management Information Systems
Performing Arts: President of the Villanova Spires, tenor in Villanova Singers and performer in Villanova Student Musical Theatre

Before coming to Villanova, Shamar Long ’25 VSB had honed his singing skills in church and on stage in musical theater, but he had never performed with an a cappella group.

“I had no idea how it was going to be, but I was immediately sold when I walked into the audition room for the Villanova Spires,” says Shamar, a tenor whose audition song was “How Deep Is Your Love.”

“I joined to have a creative outlet and to do something I love, and that turned into being a part of several groups,” he says. A major in Management Information Systems, Shamar performs with Villanova Singers and Villanova Student Musical Theatre (VSMT) in addition to the Spires. He’s wowed audiences from Ithan Avenue to Montreal, Canada, and Barcelona, Spain, with the breadth, depth and range of his voice. His repertoire encompasses many styles of music from sacred to soul, gospel to contemporary.

Shamar also serves as the publicity director of VSMT and president of the Spires. “As president, I work to ensure our group is heard as a collective and seen as a collective at the same time,” he says. “The arts have given me a space to be myself while engaging with people who are on different paths than me but who all share the same passion.”



Melody Hutchins ’26 VSB

Hometown: Frederick, Md.



Shamar Long ’25 VSB

Hometown: Philadelphia, Pa.



Tess Chiarello '26 VSB

Hometown: Lake Winnepesaukee, N.H.



Cole Joyce '27 VSB

Hometown: St. Louis, Mo.

As actors, singers, set designers and musicians in Villanova's close-knit performing arts community, these VSB students have developed numerous skills and qualities that help them succeed in the classroom and in business: creative problem-solving, quick analytic thinking, improved public speaking and communication skills, team building, confidence, perseverance, and resilience, to name a few.

Tess Chiarello '26 VSB

Majors: Management and International Business

Minor: Business Law

Performing Arts: Props manager for Villanova Student Theatre crew, scene shop assistant at the John and Joan Mullen Center for the Performing Arts

Though all of her work happens behind the scenes, Tess Chiarello '26 VSB says theater has shaped almost every aspect of her life.

As an assistant in the Scene Shop at the Mullen Center for the Performing Arts and the props manager for the Villanova Student Theatre crew, Tess has literally set the stage for some of Villanova's most captivating productions over the last two years. The stunningly intricate set for *The Spanish Tragedy* was a standout for her—she helped to bring a two-story mansion-style building to life on stage, complete with a sweeping staircase and climbing vines.

"In order to build a set and create a show, you must be able to work as a team while simultaneously working by yourself," says Tess, a dual major in Management and International Business. "You have to be able to work through problems quickly and come up with efficient solutions."

Even a seemingly basic task in set design like painting foliage for a jungle scene demands vision, creativity, independent initiative, decision-making and precision. "This kind of freedom and trust helps not only build confidence but skill. I can see this confidence reflected in my group projects, work teams and other clubs on campus," Tess says. "Having to be your own leader is nerve-racking at first, but it only gets easier."

Cole Joyce '27 VSB

Major: Marketing

Minors: Business Law and English

Performing Arts: Tenor in Villanova Spires, performer in Villanova Student Musical Theatre

Cole Joyce '27 VSB never questioned how theater and singing would fit in with academic pursuits in VSB. He jumped in with both feet. In his first semester, he joined the Spires as a tenor in the all-male a cappella group and took on the role of Wednesday's love interest/fiancé in VSMT's production of *The Addams Family: A New Musical*.

"Because of the Spires and VSMT, I embrace opportunities to stand out and am a much more effective communicator," he says. "My involvement in the arts has taught me to solve problems in the classroom and in life through a more creative lens."

Cole's passion for the arts was a driving force in selecting his major as well. "Marketing is a way for me to keep my creativity and imagination alive in a business setting," says Cole, who also discovered his interest in business law during the fall semester.

A core course on Corporate Responsibility and Regulation taught by Cathy J. Toner, JD, assistant dean, External Relations and Event Planning, inspired him to pursue a Business Law minor and consider law school after completing his business degree. "She showed me how the creativity, problem-solving and communication skills I've developed through the arts were not only relevant but valuable in both business and law," Cole says.



Owen Dorlac '26 VSB
Hometown: Fort Collins, Colo.



Gianna Pacilio '26 VSB
Hometown: Kendall Park, N.J.

The performing arts are more than a creative outlet for these Villanova Business students—they’re also an essential component of their success.

Owen Dorlac '26 VSB

Major: Applied Quantitative Finance
Minor: English
Performing Arts: Actor in Villanova Student Theatre

The theatre bug bit Owen Dorlac '26 VSB just before he came to Villanova. He acted on stage for the first time in his senior year of high school and immediately fell in love. “I was determined not to lose that going into college, so I began looking for a theatre group as soon as I set foot on campus,” he says.

He joined Villanova Student Theatre his first semester and has appeared in every performance since, from *Macbeth* to *The Outsiders*. A pianist himself, Owen says the undeniable highlight of his theatre career at Villanova was playing the 18th-century composer Salieri in VST’s production of *Amadeus*. It’s a demanding role: Salieri has hundreds of lines and rarely leaves the stage during the two-and-a-half hour run time. “It teaches you a lot about commitment,” says Owen, the newly elected president of VST. “You spend months rehearsing for hours and hours—all for four performances, or eight, if you’re lucky. But I would do it 100 times over.”

“Acting is one of those things you can’t do alone,” he says. “It has taught me how to be a team player and shown me the amazing things a team is capable of doing when they’re working hard together toward a common goal.”

Gianna Pacilio '26 VSB

Major: Marketing
Minors: Communication and Business Law
Performing Arts: French horn player in the Villanova Band and trumpet player in the Villanova Jazz Band

Before joining the Villanova Band, Gianna Pacilio '26 VSB had always struggled with public speaking. But at New Student Orientation for the Class of 2028, all eyes in the Finneran Pavilion were on her—as she stood center court teaching hundreds of incoming students how to sing “V for Villanova.”

“Needless to say, that fear has essentially disappeared,” says Gianna, a Marketing major who now has many opportunities to speak in front of large crowds as president of VU Band and publicity chair of Villanova Jazz Band. “Being a part of the Villanova Band and Villanova Jazz Band has really helped me develop my marketing skills and my confidence.”

One of the oldest and largest student organizations on campus, VU Band was definitely a factor in Gianna’s choice to go to Villanova. “I have been involved with band since I was in third grade, so it seemed natural to me to continue making music in college,” says Gianna, who plays the trumpet and the French horn. “Musicians tend to stick together and support one another, so I was also seeking out that community. From my first day at Villanova when I met everyone else in the VU Band, I knew I made the right choice.” \V/

In the final round of interviews for a competitive global investment banking internship, a vice president at the firm asked Owen Dorlac '26 VSB a question he’s heard many times: How do you balance your major in Applied Quantitative Finance with your demanding schedule as an actor in Villanova Student Theatre?

Owen’s answer: You make time for the things you love.

“Theater has really shaped who I am as a person, and it’s not a part of myself I can set aside,” says Owen, who will intern as an analyst at DC Advisory this summer. “I don’t have to give up on my professional career because I’m passionate about acting.”