

Repentino. Period.

The student-produced literary arts magazine has hit its stride. And there's more to it than you might think.

By Kelly Arthur Garrett, ASF Parent



Above: Upper School librarian Harry Brake with ASF senior and magazine editor-in-chief Alia Suhaimi. Left: The ASF literary arts publication staff is a big one. What you see here is less than half of it.

There are three things you may not know about *Repentino*, the literary magazine for ASF student work.

The first is that it's not called *Repentino*, exactly. The second is that it's not a literary magazine per se. And the third is that it's not just for ASF student work.

The correct name of the annual publication is *Repentino.*, with a dot at the end, no matter where it falls in a sentence. Thus, for the rest of this article, what may look like spurious periods overlooked during proofreading have in fact been intentionally inserted in obedience to the preferred orthography.

"I don't know how exactly the period got there," says Harry Brake, the Upper School librarian who serves as adviser to the *Repentino* staff. "But once it started to appear people liked it. They said it gave it personality. So we kept it."

Adds Alia Suhaimi, an ASF senior who is *Repentino*'s editor-in-chief, "The last thing I do in the editing process is go through the entire magazine and make sure every time the name is mentioned there's a period at the end of it."

As for the second point, *Repentino* was born with the intention of publishing short stories and poetry, but it soon became apparent that there's too much good art and photography out there to ignore.

"I describe it now as a literary arts magazine," Alia says. "We try to have an equal amount of literature and art."

As for student work, there's plenty of it in the magazine, but much of the content comes from ASF staffers, off-campus students and professionals in Mexico, and a growing selection of international artists and writers.

"The idea is for the staff to get in contact with people outside their own circles," Mr. Brake says. "That broadens the perspective and makes the magazine more universal in terms of what kinds of things are in there."

So, to review: *Repentino.* with a dot. Text and images. Far-flung contributors.

Those three issues being cleared up, it's appropriate now to point out that *Repentino.* is one of the great campus success stories. It started four years ago when a handful of creatively oriented students sought to fill the void left by

Reflections, its highly regarded predecessor that had run its course, as even the best literary magazines tend to do sooner or later.

They wanted the reincarnation to have its own identity, which meant coming up with a new name. After a brief flirtation with "Baby Cakes," cooler heads prevailed and *Repentino*, at first without the dot, carried the day. It means, in Spanish, "sudden" or "unexpected."

From that initial effort has grown a school-sanctioned extra curricular club of 69 members, all of whom are working after school to produce the fourth annual issue of *Repentino.*, which is expected to be out in May 2015.

That's a pretty big staff for an annual magazine, about 65 more than for Focus. But it is, after all, a student undertaking, so the emphasis is on involvement, teamwork and a learning experience (as well as putting out a high-quality product).

The club members are divided into four staffs at the beginning of the school year — art content, literary content, layout and an important outreach category called PR. The first order of business is

to get the submissions in so there's something to put in the magazine.

This the content editors do by issuing a call on the *Repentino* Tumblr site (repentinomagazine.tumblr.com), along with the criteria for what the work should consist of. Submissions that don't meet the criteria, such as the pizza recipe that came in once, are the first to be rejected (always with an appreciative thank you note).

The priority deadline for the fourth issue is December 10, which has most likely passed as you read this. But there's a secondary deadline on February 14, 2015, so finish up that poem or digital art piece you've been working on and send it in.

"Once the submission period is closed — and even before that — the accepted ones go to the layout people," Alia says. "I work with layout extensively to help figure out how we're going to put the magazine together and what images go best with which stories."

That's the hard part. Don't go spreading this around, but the truth is that if you read your share of poetry and short fiction, and pretty much know how English works (or Spanish sometimes; *Repentino* is bilingual), then you can do a passable job as a literary magazine editor. Not so with design. When you're actually creating physical pages to be printed, you have to know what you're doing.

"There's a whole learning curve with design," Mr. Brake says. "You need to work with InDesign and connect it with

Photoshop. There's been some training classes. Before, we used to wing it."

The hard work has paid off. The current (third) issue is thinner than the last one, but without a skippable page in it.

"Mount Olympus" by ASF senior Alice Kanitz (who also writes essays; see page 38) contains perhaps the truest words in the magazine: "the coffee makes sense."

ASF faculty member D.J. Hamilton contributed "Parque México," which at times gives us a glimpse of what Dylan Thomas might have sounded like had he lived in our century: "... their skin-tight, lycra-light, water wicking workout clothes."

There's a profound and disturbing exploration of suicidal tendencies, ironically titled "My Love," penned by a now-graduated varsity football player who stunned the staff — and re-shattered an outdated stereotype — with his compelling poetry submission.

And, as they say, there's much, much more. You can get your copy at the ASF Upper School Library, or by requesting one at asflitmag@gmail.com, or by calling (55) 5227-1900, adding the country code 52 at the beginning if you're calling from outside Mexico. *Repentino.* costs 80 pesos.

But what if they published a school literary arts magazine and nobody knew about it? That was indeed a concern with the earlier issues. But no more. The reason for the change can be summed up in three words: Open Mic Night.

The quarterly informal showcasing of local talent — open to anybody with the chutzpah to get up there and perform — is organized by the *Repentino.* club and always packs the US Library where it takes place.

"Most people didn't know about the magazine until they found out through Open Mic," Alia says. "With *Repentino.*, we obviously want to encourage artists and writers to express themselves. But with Open Mic Night we're reaching out to a broader community — musicians, dancers, actors — so they have a place to go whenever they want to perform something."

The *Repentino.* club, in line with ASF tradition and values, is also starting to get involved with community service projects. Staffers recently mentored Middle School students involved with NaNoWriMo — National Novel Writing Month — and in the planning stage is an Empty Bowls night, where paying guests are served dinner in student-crafted ceramic bowls that they get to keep, while other bowls are auctioned off. Proceeds go to charity.

"When we do these other projects — an open mic here, empty bowls there — people understand that the club is not just self-serving, that it promotes the arts in a bigger way," Mr. Brake says.

Adds Alia, "The magazine is annual, so we have an entire year to do as much as we can with the community, especially with the artistic community." 🐾



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