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# Friar Up '19-'20!

*The "official" newsletter of the University of Michigan Friars*



With articles from current Friars Ryan  
Lynch and Alex Forrest

All Photo Credits to Adam Rarey  
Edited by Ryan Lynch

# Meet The Fri-Guys!

Six Friars made their debut this year so there's a whole lot to catch up on!

## Owen Nakatani



Gentlemen! My name is Owen Nakatani, also known as Big O, and I'm a senior studying Chemical Engineering. This is my third semester in the group, as I joined with Ryan Lynch in the Fall 2018 semester. It's crazy to think how Ryan and I went from the newest to oldest Friars in just 1 academic year, and that large amount of turnover in the group has definitely been challenging. However,

last year's group has been so helpful, and this year's group has been so eager to learn, making the transition quite smooth.

I've truly enjoyed my time in Friars, as these guys have really become some of my best friends. Being in this group has literally changed my life, highlighted by getting my internship last summer (and eventual full time job) from a connection made after a gig in Traverse City (Rhonda Germany is the GOAT). While I'm sad that my time in Friars is already almost 75% complete, I'll be sure to cherish the 64th SBC and BCE and the rest of my senior year!

## Ryan Lynch



**Hello! My name is Ryan Lynch and I am one of the three returning members to this year's group. Affectionately known as Ryly, I'm currently a senior and am now halfway through my second and sadly last year in the Friars. I first auditioned as a freshman, and was accepted as a sophomore with my fellow senior Owen Nakatani. It's been quite the ride ever since! From**

**being forced to eat a Costco cake with only my face and hands during my first performance at Rackham, to performing in NYC at the Triad Theater, to all of the memories I've made with this year's group already, the Friars has been a cornerstone of my college experience.**

**I've spent my four years at Michigan studying Film as well as Communications, watching a whole lot of football, and making friendships that I know will last long past my time here. Of course, the Friars has given me many of those friendships, and I'm sure that many Prior Friars share this sentiment. Making great music, telling terrible jokes, and drinking too much Molson has a way of drawing people together. I could not be more excited for this year's SBC and BCE!**



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## Joe Isaac



Hello friends! I'm Joe, or sometimes affectionately referred to as Daddy to the other gentlemen in this group, and I'm a senior studying Chemical Engineering (with Big O) and minoring in Chemistry. This is my first, last, and only year in the group as I will be graduating in May and then heading to Midland MI. Not quite sure what the guys were thinking when they took a chance on a guy who would only have one year in the group total, but I'm definitely glad they did! I have feeling they made up for it by forcing me to explain what a "Bear" is to the BCE audience.

It's definitely been a fun-filled and busy year so far, but we've made the most of it. The other fun fact about my ~existence~ in the Friars is that I break the spell of the group not having a MGC baritone in the group for a couple of years. Though I had to trick them by letting me in when I was still a "bass" (I was never actually a bass) and then switched. Can't get rid of me now fellas!



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## Ben DeVries



Greetings!! I am Ben DeVries, commonly known as "B-team" by some Clubbers because I formerly played on the Club Ultimate Frisbee B-team. However! I will have you know that I made the A-team and politely declined the invitation. I am one of the two juniors in the group and one of the many new members in the group this fall. This fall is

actually only my third semester in Club because I did not join until the fall of my sophomore year. Despite missing a year of club, I am glad I joined when I did, the friends and memories I have already made are irreplaceable. Also, I continue the long line of Traverse City Friars and Clubbers, succeeding Fisher Diede and others before me.

On a more studious note, I am in the School of Engineering studying Industrial and Operations Engineering. I am also in the process of considering several options for a Master's degree but remain undecided. I am very excited to be a Friar and love all the guys here with me.



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## Jack Riley



Hi! I'm Jack Riley! I'm a junior in the School of Engineering, majoring in Civil Engineering. I am also a part of the Engineering Global Leadership Honors Program, where I'm pursuing the International Minor for Engineers, taking classes through the Ross School of Business, and continuing to learn German. As part of the EGL program, I'll be staying a 5th year to get my masters

degree, and I'm ready to be the butt of the joke every time we sing Graduate. I am also heavily involved in the civil engineering honors society Chi Epsilon, where I've been Vice President for the past two semesters.

Outside of school, I love to sit with friends and play games. Board games, video games, word games, tabletop games, drinking games, I love 'em all! I might not be very good at most games, but that doesn't stop me from trying my hardest to win. I can't imagine a more fitting way to spend my first semester as a Friar than singing alongside eight of the finest gentlemen this side of the Mississippi. I'm excited to make people groan at my dad jokes and laugh at my terrible dance moves. More than anything though, I'm excited to have fun on stage with my best buds.



## Kevin Yan



Hello, hello! My name is Kevin Yan, but I'm also known within the group as Kev, Gebin, Gavin, and whatever else the guys can come up with this semester. I'm one of the few returning members this year, where I'm now serving as the man behind the piano. I'm currently a sophomore studying computer science in the College of Engineering. I'm also trying to get minors in both music and

mathematics, so you can always find me in the Ugli wondering if I ever will graduate on time.

Even though I've only been in the Friars for one semester prior to this one, being a part of the group has quickly become a major part of my life. Serving as the piano plunker for rehearsals has been an extremely rewarding experience; on top of already serving a major role in the group, I've also had the opportunity to lead rehearsals and teach parts. By far my favorite part of being in the Friars has definitely been the other guys who have quickly become some of my closest friends. Whether we're working our butts off during rehearsals or making godawful jokes during performances, there's not a moment I don't cherish when I'm with them.



## Jake White



My name is Jake White, though you may remember me as the dude who bit into a whole lemon last spring. I am halfway through my sophomore year, so I will be sticking around for a while. I started off here as a Voice performance Major, but eventually decided to switch to a multidisciplinary voice student. I felt the need to escape the dying industry of Opera, which really is just singing a bunch of songs that viewers need

subtitles to enjoy. My hobbies include bingeing Netflix shows, writing music, playing the digital farming masterpiece that is Hay Day, and wishing I had a dog. Joining The Friars has been a dream of mine for years.

I grew up right outside of Ann Arbor and actually went to the Glee Club's Male Vocal Arts Day Program twice. In this event you actually get to perform with the Glee Club as well as hear the Friars sing songs and attempt jokes. For anyone who doesn't know what high school tenor and bass sections are like, there are usually about 10 dudes at most in a 40 person choir. Joining Glee Club was amazing because it showed me what it is like to sing with about 100 people. Glee Club made me realize how amazing it is to sing in such a big ensemble of talented singers. But the high school choir days do have a special place in my heart, which is why I decided to sing in a really small group of mediocre singers once again.





## Matt Lichtinger



Hi! My name is Matt Lichtinger, more widely known as “Matty L’s”, a name so graciously bestowed on me by Fisher Diede during my first few weeks of Club. I am from Findlay, OH (don’t worry, I’ve been a Michigan fan my entire life) and am studying electrical engineering at UM. I spent a lot of my younger years at our cottage on Lake Erie, going to Cedar Point many times and, of course, arguing with many Ohio State fans... who are also some of my dearest friends. I’ve been

singing ever since 3rd grade church choir, and my best friends have always been members of the music groups I’m in. This has continued in Glee Club and The Friars, as both groups have been an incredible source of community and friendship for me over the past 1.5 years.

Being from Ohio and having no one else from my high school come to UM, I longed to find that same place where I could be myself, meet some lifelong friends, and make wonderful music all at the same time. Suffice it to say, these groups have done just that, and I have made an innumerable amount of memories already. As the business manager of Friars, I work to maintain an accurate budget and seek to maximize concert/gig revenue in order to subsidize our Club tour as much as possible; because this year is an expensive international tour, our goal is to subsidize half of tour (\$1,250/member). I can’t wait to keep singing with my brothers in song for the next three years, and I look forward to meeting many of you at our upcoming concerts.



## Alex Forrest



Hey there, my name is Alex Forrest and, by many measures, I am the babiest of the Friars. I am the newest Friar in that I was accepted into the group at the end of Winter semester 2019 but I also have the largest cheeks, by my measure. I was actually a New New guy to club last semester, and the whole sequence of events of brand new to Friar was both wonderfully exciting and a little intimidating, to say the least. I joined Glee club and instantly found myself drawn to the Friars. They were all such wonderful guys, and now I am so happy I get to be one of them.

I am from Muskegon, MI which is arguably in the Grand Rapids metropolitan area but is situated on the shores of Lake Michigan. At Michigan I am a linguistics major, which is something that I enjoy talking about as you can ask any of the Friars. They're used to my random non-sequiturs about the exact articulation of the vowel [u] versus the vowel [ʊ]. I come by it honestly, however, I had to learn the international phonetic alphabet in classical voice lessons. From there it was kinda just a rabbit hole that I fell into.

I grew up doing every bit of theater and singing I could, being supported by my parents, both of whom are musicians themselves. I did improv classes for four years, I was in the musical every year in my high school, and I was always in choirs, be they at school or at a church or any other place I could sing with others. All of this is to say that I have been doing a lot of very ridiculous things for singing for a very long time. Now that I am a member of the Friars I do not intend to stop any time soon. Maybe the Friars should start doing a holiday concert. I will bet we could make a tree of just nine guys.



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*Rebuilding and*  
*Reloading: The*  
*2019-20 Friars*

By Ryan Lynch



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**This time last year I was a new Friar.** There were only two of us that year, Owen Nakatani and myself, and it was fantastic. I had always considered myself a decent musician, but Friars pushed me to achieve a new level of musicianship. I'd had plenty of good times with the Glee Club, but it was with the Friars that I performed on Broadway and got to sing at sororities. In my first year as a Friar, the group was everything I wanted it to be, and more.

But, that was going to change. The 2018-2019 group was so gifted both musically and socially because the group was so experienced. Of the nine of us, six were graduating seniors. One would leave after fall semester, and the rest would follow in the winter. The remaining members would be Jacob Emery, Owen, myself, and Kevin Yan, who replaced Tommy Lammers after the fall semester. However, once Jacob was elected Glee Club president, he left the group to dedicate himself fully to running the Glee Club. This meant that seven of us would need replacing. On top of that, a combined thirty five semesters of experience as Friars would be leaving the group. The three of us that remained had a combined total of five.

It was daunting to say the least, especially because I had spent my first year in the group as a relatively minor contributor. To be specific, I was the beatboxer. In a group that thrives on performing songs like "Toot Toot Tootsie Goodbye" and "Ave Maria", it wasn't exactly a big job.

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It was because of this that I entered this year with a fair amount of anxiety regarding Friars. I thought I wasn't ready to be a leader. I'd only performed with this group once, "Bear Necessities" at the 63rd BCE, and even that performance was brief. There were too many unknowns, and I fixated on them all.

I now realize that my anxiety was unnecessary. Instead of focusing on our possible flaws, I should have been focusing on our many opportunities.

Though it is cliché, the phrase "we don't rebuild, we reload" encapsulates this group perfectly. While some fantastic people did leave the group this past year, this group presents an exciting blend of talent, humor, and potential that is uniquely enjoyable to experience. The tenor voices of Alex Forrest, Jake White, and Jack Riley allow us to explore song choices that previous groups would rather not perform. In complementing our strong tenor section, Ben DeVries and Matt Lichtinger have both done a fantastic job holding down the bass clef, while Joe Isaac is both versatile and talented enough to move parts on a per song basis.

But as highly as I can speak to the musical ability of each new Friar, I can speak even higher to the character of all these men. I'm extremely lucky to know them, and luckier still to call them my friends. Rehearsals are a challenge, not because of conflicting personalities or hostile exchanges, but because we're usually laughing too

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hard to get work done. Even on our worst days, I still enjoy their company. After all, there isn't much that can top making music with your best friends.

As we approach my final SBC, I'm happy to say that my worries about this group are a thing of the past. All that remains are feelings of excitement, anticipation, and pride. **F**

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# *The Tree of Fear*

By Alex Forrest



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**My acceptance into the group really came as a surprise.** I began my first semester at Michigan by auditioning for the Glee club and a few a cappella groups on campus, only to be rejected from everything. In a way, I am glad this happened because it made me reevaluate what I thought about myself and sort of ensured that any undue confidence I might have had coming out of high school was quickly dealt with. As for why it happened, I can't say I know for sure but I have an idea. I have had my fair share of experience in singing, but in the greatest irony of my life, I invariably get anxious each and every time I perform.

My high school choral program was one that is relatively respected in West Michigan. The Mona Shores choir had about 300 people, and it occupied the same place in my high school's culture that I like to imagine a football team would in a lot of others. Our musicals were always a big deal for the community, and I have done untold ridiculous things for that choir. We did a lot more than just the musicals, however. I had some of the most amazing experiences in that choir, such as singing in the Mona Shores Singing Christmas Tree.

The Mona Shores Singing Christmas Tree was an annual Christmas concert which is exactly what it sounds like. We, the students, would stand in a 67-foot tall Christmas tree made of scaffolding and garland and perform a Christmas concert that lasted ~2 ½ hours, all while a horde of parents climbed around inside the tree to give out



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microphones or pull kids who had fainted out of the tree. Also, all the students were wearing sailor costumes, because the Mona Shores Sailors' choir uniform was not the most creative.

I would like you to imagine something: you are standing in a tree, pressed shoulder to shoulder with people you vaguely know like sardines in a can. You are blinded by the stage lights that are directly in front of you. They are so close because you are about 30 feet off the ground, level with the balcony. An hour has gone by, you have another hour and a half to go, plus you have had to pee since the first song. You have just finished trying to not fall dangerously flat on some arrangement of Jingle Bells, a feat made much harder by the freshman in your ear who thinks that a C# is the same thing as a C, and are about to move on to the single Channuka song that you do each year when you feel something.

A tug on the pant leg of your ill-fitting, 100% polyester, sailor uniform that was made in the 70's. Before you can even attempt to decipher the myriad of things that vague signal could mean, you feel a microphone shoved into your hand from behind, inside the tree, by someone who must be hanging between the tangle of steel beams. You feel this and your stomach drops - how did you forget that you have a solo in the next song? Carefully watching the glow-in-the-dark batons of your director, situated on the balcony about 30 feet in front of you, drag your 300 classmates through the

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Hebrew, you feel your moment draw close. You get lost in the music, just singing, moving, the tree swaying with the bouncing of the students therein like a dangerously high stack of pancakes in a cartoon. Suddenly the little glowing line of the baton turns into a dot as it points at you. The heat of the incandescent lights behind your head suddenly feels like a little balls of burning wax and your world is illuminated by a spotlight that feels like the headlights of an oncoming truck. You sing.

That is what singing in the tree is like. I did that for four years. After having done that enough, I would have thought that nothing onstage could get to me, but I still have trouble beating away that pit of panic in my stomach each time I sing. In high school, I was always really neurotic and driven, as I think that every Michigan student was. However, when I came to Michigan, as I maybe should have expected, this neuroticism developed into a lot of anxiety.

Now in the time that I have been here I have been able to deal with that, but when I was doing my initial auditioning for Glee club, it was definitely still problematic. It manifested in such a way that I could never vocally perform the way I wanted to. My voice would always be a little shaky, my range and technique would go out the window, and my entire mind would focus on my fear. My second semester at Michigan, however, was a lot better than the first. I knew how to handle my fear and I was determined to make it into Glee Club. And by God, I did it.

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By the end of that semester I had found a niche that made me feel like I was where I needed to be. That led to my meteoric, if you will pardon the expression, rise into the Friars. I figured, “Why not audition? I love all of those guys and I want to do a cappella. What’s the worst that happens, I have a bad night?” Well it turns out that was one of the best decisions I have ever made. My reaction was exactly the same as the one comment that reached my ears as I was announced as the newest Friar during the business meeting a few days after the audition. From the back of my room I heard someone say, “Isn’t he new?” Well now I am here, and I am beyond happy. When it comes to the anxiety, though, it isn’t always a walk in the park. Gigging with the Friars, I have to put myself in situations that pique it all the time. But I think that is very healthy for me. These new situations have almost eliminated the old friend I have always felt when I perform. It is maybe the most ironic of my fears.

I am a singer who has a nearly crippling case of stage fright. The other things I am afraid of make more sense: needles, the inevitable heat death of the universe, heights. All of those can hurt you, but people in the audience aren’t going to hurt me. Not unless I sing incredibly badly for them, then I guess they could hurt me with flying fruit. I have done some of the craziest things onstage; from singing in drag to fainting from locking my knees in a massive Christmas tree I should be over that anxiety. But the one thing

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that seems to have helped me the most? The Friars. Having my best friends by my side while we sing songs about how Ohio State sucks is all I need. **F**