

# Unseen warriors of color guard

Male athletes, nonbinary athletes play pivotal role

By Lindsey Steel

Modern dance and ballet instruction coupled with telling a story through weaponry such as rifles and flags can only be found in one sport: color guard.

But despite the intense training and athleticism that goes into color guard, sophomore Taishi Maekawa said many have the notion it is a feminine sport.

"There is a commonly heard stereotype color guard is only for girls, since its participants are traditionally girls," Maekawa said. "But it's perfectly normal for everyone to do it."

In fact, color guard is a place for any athlete, regardless of gender, junior Hannah Wehbeh said.

In her three years of color guard experience, Wehbeh said at least one boy or nonbinary mem-

ber has been on the team every season. Additionally, the roles male and nonbinary members of color guard play are nearly identical to that of any girl, Wehbeh said.

"The only difference between guys and girls is girls are inherently more flexible," Wehbeh said. "Guys, on the other hand, are inherently stronger and taller."

Although everyone contributes equally in color guard, the stereotype that excludes boys from the sport can isolate some athletes, junior Itai Kolin said.

"I feel very different," Kolin said. "The contrast is obvious, especially with my body. I'm taller than everyone else, and that just highlights our differences."

Additionally, Kolin said assumptions have frequently been made about his identity due to his participation in the sport.

"The boys on guard all get assumptions about their sexuality and gender," Kolin said. "I have received some blatantly homophobic and transphobic comments before, and that makes me feel uncomfortable."

Despite the stereotypes boys in color guard have to overcome outside of practice, the team

still harbors an inclusive and supportive environment, Maekawa said.

"All athletes on the team are supportive and that creates a great environment for everyone."



Photo courtesy of Itai Kolin

**INCLUSIVITY IN GUARD:** Male and nonbinary members face extra obstacles from peers.