

AU's Got Talent

Students show off their skills at the popular annual event

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Students Gideon Moyo and Ben Dietal perform on "hoverboards" during Saturday evening's AU's Got Talent program in the Howard Center.(Photo by Tanya Ebenezer)

By: Danni Francis

Scores of students filled the lobby of the Howard Performing Arts Center on Saturday evening, January 25, for the much-anticipated AU's Got Talent, an annual talent show sponsored by the Andrews University Student Association (AUSA). Jason Shockey, senior management major and AUSA president, as well as Connor Smith, sophomore international agriculture development major and AUSA public relations director, provided laughs and entertainment between acts as hosts and emcees of the event.

This year the program featured 13 student acts. Hang Time, a group of several boys ranging from freshmen to seniors performed a mini trampoline routine including back flips and leaping over a huddle of volunteers.

Yasmin Phillip, freshman nutrition science and dietetics major, took the stage energetically, playing "Every Time I Feel The Spirit," arranged by Mark Hayes, on the grand piano.

Cameron Van Buren, junior communication major, engaged audience members with a lively call-and-response original rap titled “Just Kids.”

Alicia Dent, freshman music performance major and crowd favorite, played “Confetti” by Tori Kelly on the guitar, using finger-style playing and well-executed vocal runs. Dent won third place for her performance.

Gideon Moyo, sophomore, and Ben Dietal, sophomore physics major, then glided out on self-balancing electric scooters, also commonly referred to as “hoverboards,” performing the song “I Am a Thoughtful Guy” by Rhett and Link. The two, often moving in synchronized movements, evoked much laughter from viewers.

After a handful of musical performances, Abednego Maloya, junior management major, changed the pace with performance art. While the song “Still the Cross” by FFH echoed in the ears of onlookers, Maloya painted a cross superimposed with a portrait of Jesus splattered with red paint, representing Christ’s blood. When interviewed by Shockey and Smith, he humbly expressed gratitude that the paint worked well as he had used markers and different mediums previously.

Black Ice, an a cappella singing group with three male and three female members, took the stage next, led by Serge Gideon, junior English major and director of After the Storm, a popular campus choir. The group sang an arrangement of “Hold on We’re Going Home” by Drake and “Where Are You Now” by Justin Bieber.

Emily McGee, sophomore chemistry major, and Alefa Afalava, junior biochemistry major, performed a compilation of songs by popular artist Corinne Bailey Rae. McGee sang while Afalava accompanied her on the piano.

The only returning act, The Human Element, presented two pieces of original poetry: “Just My Thoughts” and “How to Write a Good Poem.” The act featured the use of a hand-selected audience member who was brought to the stage. The Human Element is a one-man group consisting of Nashon Grandison, sophomore biology major.

Leticia Bullard, freshman design major, Carlyle Tagalog, sophomore psychology major and Andrew Gagliu, freshman engineering major, performed a compilation of Ed Sheeran songs.

Jonathan Doram, senior music education major, performed an impressive excerpt from “Piano Concerto #2” by Sergei Prokofiev, stunning audience members with the depth and emotion of the piece.

The penultimate performance and well-deserving winners of the night, roommates Denae Keizs, a freshman Explore Andrews student, and Dana Wilson, a freshman music performance major, performed “Thinking Out Loud,” an original composition consisting of Keizs on the piano and Wilson on the violin. The two went back and forth in conversation about their various thoughts on myriad subjects including, but not limited to, boys, gazebo burritos and personal walks with God.

Moments after Keizs and Wilson were declared winners Keisz eagerly shared her excitement with the crowd.

“We didn’t think we were going to win,” she said. “We decided to do this over Christmas break but we didn’t really start working on it until a couple days before the audition and even right before we got onstage we changed something! I’m just so glad it all worked out. Thank you to everyone that voted for us,” she said with an energetic smile.

Her partner, best friend and roommate, Wilson said, “I feel great, it was really fun! My roommate and I do a lot of things together and I’m excited that this one worked out.” The two have been friends for years and both hail from Georgia.

The final performance of the night, a spectacular aerial silks routine by Luz Baez, senior biology major, took second place. The routine was performed in the lobby and live-streamed for audience members in the main hall of the Howard.

Students were asked to visit OrgSync, an online communication tool used by the University to share information with students throughout the year, to vote electronically and then Smith announced the votes within minutes. The event was well attended and students gathered in the lobby after the end of the show to discuss upcoming AUSA events: Comedy Night and The Group-Off.

“This is something we started planning months ago,” says Ashley Neu, junior public relations major, AUSA social vice president and member of the organizational team. “I love watching it all come together and seeing everybody have a good time. I think it went really well. Here at Andrews we have a lot of talented students so it was really exciting to see all those talents come together in such an exciting way.”

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