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Students Give a Slamming Performance

Student-Poets Compete in Biggest Ever RWU Poetry Slam



November 29, 2012 | [Kaleigh Wilson '13](#)

Writing original poetry can be challenging enough. But in this contest students aren't allowed to rest on only their writing laurels – their performance of the poem accounts for nearly half of their score. One competitor rapped his original words, another slammer incorporated her powerful singing voice and another narrated her poem as if it were a postcard.

In the Seventh Biannual Poetry Slam competition on November 8, six members of the RWU faculty and staff served as judges, awarding scores divided up as 40 percent for performance and 60 percent for poem content.

With a funky soundtrack playing between performances provided by co-sponsor, RWU's radio station WQRI, the first round saw lively efforts by 14 competing slammers as well as two sacrificial poets – students who receive scores from the judges but are not entered in the competition. The FCAS 157 lecture hall with stadium seating was filled with viewers anticipating outstanding performances to rival slams past.

"I think this is the biggest slam we've ever had," said Karen Bilotti, Associate Direct of Tutorial Support Services and organizer of the Poetry Slam, with a grin.

After two rounds of stiff competition, three winners came out on top. In third place was junior Jason Shepard; in second place was junior Jacquylene Brzozowski; and the first place winner of the Fall 2012 Poetry Slam was senior Ryan Treppedi.

Treppedi notes that his appeal to poetry slamming is a result of his passion for abstraction and, as a musician, performance. The first poem that he performed received a standing ovation from the audience. A relatable piece, Treppedi's poem is titled, "Lament of Loss of Luster."

“When you’re a kid you have so much potential to be great and unique, and slowly you grow up and society beats that out of you,” Treppedi says. “It’s important to know that you don’t have to answer to anyone else’s rules but your own and I wanted my poem to capture that.”

The poetry slam tradition started at RWU in Fall 2009, and has become a biannual event. Over the years, Bilotti has found support in a number of co-sponsors including the Writing Center, Student Advocacy, Multicultural Student Union and Media Services. In addition, Bilotti recruited junior Jesse Ramos as the event host and as a main contributor to the event’s advertising and planning efforts, as well as Olivia Worden, office manager for the Division of Student Affairs, who serves as a vital co-coordinator of the poetry slam. And for this poetry slam, Worden had a surprise in store for Bilotti – she had been working with the slammers on performance and it showed.

Each performing poet was rewarded by the shared respect and admiration manifested in the audience’s attention, applause and hoots – a testament to the poets’ talent and bravery in performing their original pieces.

“The biggest thing for me is when I look at that crowd and I see how there is this immense sharing going on,” says Bilotti.

First place winner Treppedi beamed over his accomplishment: “Winning – it was incredible. I’m very happy.”

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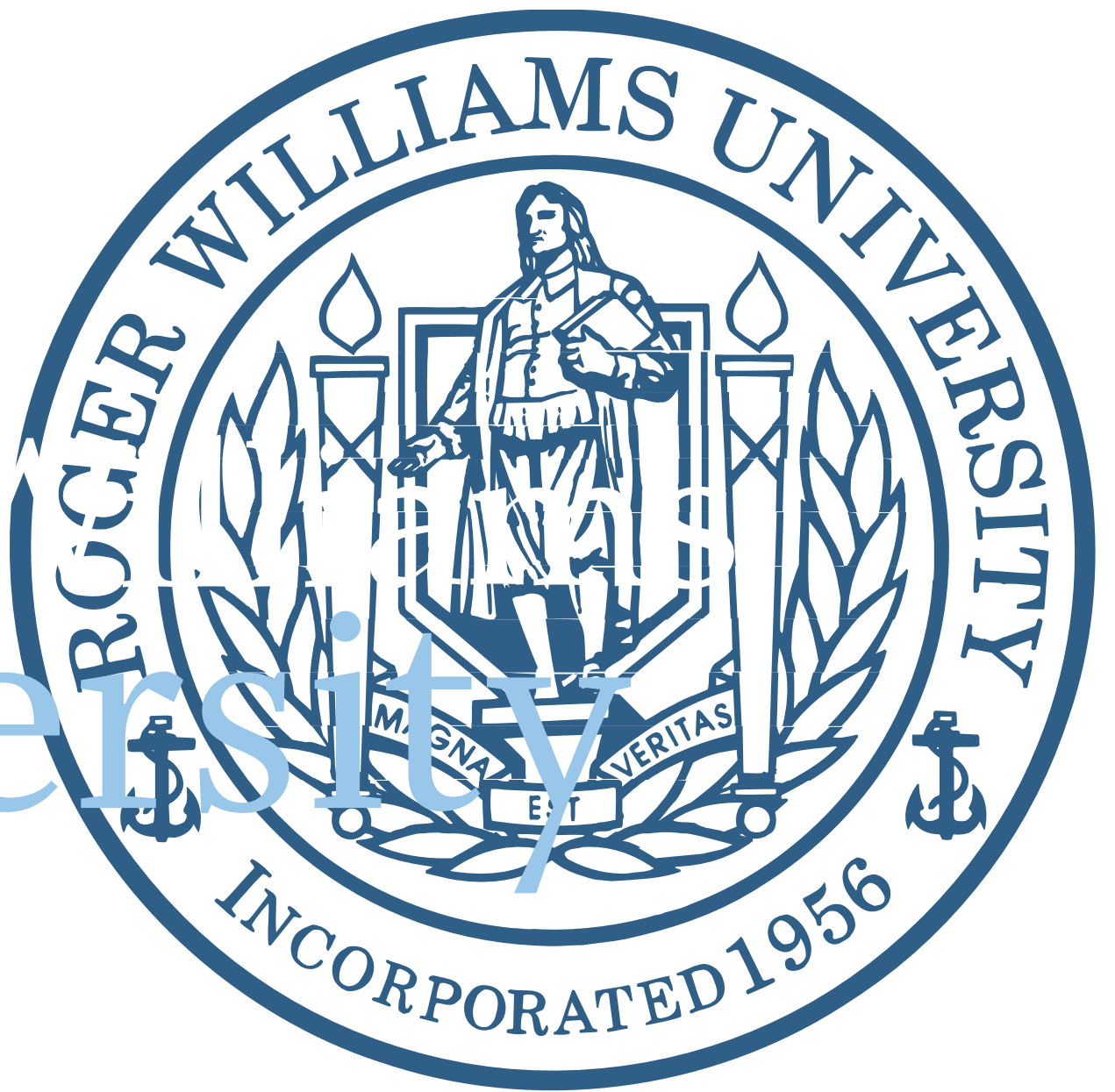
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