

JANUARY 30, 2004
THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF RICE UNIVERSITY

enter query

Search Archives

the Rice Thresher

the Rice Thresher

Location: http://the.ricethresher.org/ae/2004/01/30/slam_poetry_team_competition_bor_zarinfar

[January 30, 2004](#) > [Arts & Entertainment](#) > [Rice students infuse talent and energy with poetry](#)

Rice students infuse talent and energy with poetry

By Steve Pattyn | For the Thresher

Last Friday night's Rice Slam Poetry Competition at Willy's Pub in the Student Center exposed the concept of live, hot-wired poetry to a large audience, showcasing the most inventive and passionate poets that Rice has to offer. After the dust kicked up by Baker College senior Rassul Zarinfar's ode to dark roads cleared Rice had selected a national poetry team and a unique poetry style had left its mark on the audience of about 120.

The poetry began with a performance by Mike McGee, the current champion of the National Poetry Slam. McGee's starting act included poems about an eating contest with the Angel of Death and a crooning impression of Elvis directed at fellow poet Lovett College senior Adriana Ramirez. If you have never seen a slam poet perform, imagine a stand-up comic who combines lyricism with self-deprecation and slapstick humor. McGee kept the audience in stitches for over 20 minutes before turning the microphone over to Rice's own talents.

After a warm-up, or "sacrifice poet" presentation by Will Rice College senior Carly Kocurek to standardize the judges, eight competing poets delivered two rounds of poetry and the four finalists advanced to a third elimination round. Despite the veneer of competition created by audience members scoring the poets after each delivery, all of the performers seemed more concerned about articulating their messages. The topics varied from drunk dialing to a condemnation of self-criticism and racism delivered by Hanszen College sophomore Jennifer Weinberg.

The overall winner after three rounds was Hanszen College junior Stephen Bor. His poetry conjured up powerful images of love and youthful adventure. One of his poems described being caught while making out in a Honda Civic. The judges scores suggested that Stephen's angst-ridden prose rang true to all of the judges as he had the highest score in every round.

Bor was the winner of the contest, but audience darling Zarinfar's combination of singing and a rapid-fire delivery helped make him a strong second place finisher. The judges seemed to reward Zarinfar's creativity and detail and precision of his lyrics. Oscillating between a saccharine rendition of "You Are My sunshine" and the grim reality of an abusive father, Zarinfar cranked up the intensity of the competition.

Third place poet Weinberg relied on subject matter to reel in the audience. Her poem about mixed ethnicity elicited loud hoots of support, and the overwhelmingly female judging panel seemed entranced by her poem about why nice guys finish last, awarding it one of the highest scores of the night.

In fourth place, Ramirez channeled Jack Kerouac's angry ex-girlfriend as the audience snapped along to the chorus of "Don't let your lover make a mess out of you." The audience seemed to notice Ramirez's amazing confidence and stage presence.

The coach of the Rice Slam Team, Marcell Murphy, emceed the evening. Backed up by DJ Point-and-Click (Martel College sophomore Jason Bridges), Murphy introduced the poets and helped to build the audience's excitement. Bridges tailored the musical segue with the content of the performers act. Most noticeably, No Doubt's Underneath played immediately after Bor's piece about being loved "underneath it all."

All four poets and an alternate will be attending the National Finals in Berkeley, California this spring. Last year Rice took third place, and if Friday's performance was any indication, another strong showing is in the cards.



[Back to top](#)

Other arts & entertainment stories

- [Blood lines cross in this taut urban drama 'Top dog/Underdog'](#)
- [Kutcher fails to save 'Butterfly'](#)
- [My Pal Paris: Our favorite trashy heiress-next-door](#)
- [Striking costumes and dynamic sets mark this 'Jenufa'](#)

News

- [Air quality sign in RMC](#)
- [Archi-Arts pops to DiverseWorks](#)
- [Committee to consider alcohol policy changes](#)
- [Debate team success continues](#)
- [HACER participates in Super quiz Bowl](#)
- [Martel RA will step down at semester's end](#)
- [New Jones RA resigns from position](#)
- [No decision reached on co-president amendment](#)
- [Off-campus students seek Super profit](#)
- [Patriots stop Rice practices](#)
- [Treehouse still in quad](#)

Sports

- [Freshman track stars make early impact](#)
- [Lady Owls ride west with home-court momentum](#)
- [Larry Izzo: hungry for another ring](#)
- [McKrieth leads Owls into first](#)
- [Men's tennis hosts ranked opponents at Bentwater](#)
- [Vaulting pair sets Rice mark](#)
- [Women's tennis heads to Minnesota](#)

Opinion

- [Admissions should not be interest-based](#)
- [Alcohol Policy changes should be clear, simple](#)
- [Involve students in co-president decision](#)
- [Lessons in risk-taking from children](#)
- [Letters to the Editor](#)
- [Media ignores civil liberties infringements](#)
- [Tree huggers: Try again](#)

Copyright © 2004-6 The Rice Thresher

[Archives](#) [About Us](#) [Subscribe](#) [Advertise](#) [Contact us](#) [RSS](#)