

NEWS RELEASE

New arts festival blends the arts and engineering in Pretoria



Winners of the first ShowUP Arts Festival: Reneésa Kruger (1st place), Zarko van Niekerk (2nd place) and Freddy Swarts (3rd place)

PRETORIA - The University of Pretoria's Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) is the proud sponsor of a brand-new event to join Pretoria's youth arts scene. The ShowUP Arts Festival, which was held in the University's iconic Aula theatre on 13 July 2024, was the brainchild of David Brink, Director of the Stage Alive production company.

The aim of the festival was to foster cultural exchange, inspire artistic expression and provide a platform for emerging artists to display their talents. The spectacular event proved to be a celebration of creativity, diversity and community engagement through various forms of the performing arts. It offered school learners and students the opportunity to compete against each other in various genres. The format was based on the popular "America's Got Talent" programme, with three judges offering comments to the artists after each performance.

The judges were leaders in their field in various types of performing arts in South Africa. Mortimer Williams is a stage and television actor, best known for his starring role as Ricci September in the SABC2 drama series "Erfsondes". He has also worked in several stage musicals and television soaps, such as "7de Laan", "Isidingo" and "Scandal". Heidi Edeling is a well-known South African performer and vocal coach. She served as a judge in the South African Music Awards (SAMA) and the Aardklop Awards' Music Panel. David Brink, who also coordinated the event, is a producer and director, who has directed productions for leading artists such as Lizz

Meiring, Martin Bester, PJ Powers and Ladysmith Black Mambazo. With such auspicious judges to provide feedback, Pretoria's talented youth were eager to entertain the audience with their unique talents.

Artists were drawn from 65 of the University's feeder schools in and around Pretoria, with 250 artists from these schools, as well as the University's student community, participating in the event. It was the first of its kind in South Africa.

The event was concluded with a gala evening in the Aula. First place went to vocalist Reneésa Kruger from Hoëskool Die Wilgers, who performed the song "Never enough" from the musical "The Greatest Showman". Second place went to another talented vocalist from the same school, Zarko van Niekerk, who performed Michael Bublé's popular song "Sway". Third place went to Freddy Swarts from Hoërskool Linden, who performed a hip-hop contemporary dance item to the lyrics of Tate McCreary's "That Way".

By sponsoring this event, the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology demonstrated its commitment to promoting the role of technology in the arts. Prof Wynand Steyn, Dean of the Faculty, explains: "Although the Faculty is home to several highly technical fields, we encourage our students' development into well-rounded individuals and actively support the arts."

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their 2024 World University Rankings (WUR). UP was the only South African university featured in the 2023 World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za