

TEDxSMU Blog

The Daily Mustang

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TEDxSMU BLOG: Session 1 Gets Underway

From business professionals to SMU students, TEDxSMU is filled with a diverse array of attendees.

Getting off to a bustling, coffee-fueled start, people are anxiously anticipating Session 1 in SMU's Owens Arts Building.

At 9:30 am, hosts Kelly Stoetzel and Rives will introduce "Change Your Perspective" themed TEDTalks and live talks from Anousheh Ansari, Bobby Haas, Dave Gallo, Ira Greenberg and Joshua Prince-Ramus.

Rives joined us Thursday for a live chat on *The Daily Mustang*!

While waiting in the lobby for the doors to open, we ran into former TED speaker Jim Crupi who delivered a lecture on the future of warfare.

"Going to a TED is like going to a cafeteria filled with brain candy," said Crupi of today's events.

All we can say, is can't wait to see what he means.

TEDxSMU BLOG: Session 1 Halftime Report

The audience is packed!

I'm in the overflow simulcast room now and female astronaut Anousheh Ansari has taken the stage and is talking about how she went from being an ordinary little girl to floating through space on an elite mission.

Home videos from her zero-gravity experiences are garnering quite a few audible "ooh's" and "ahhh's."

Ansari follows presentations by aerial photographer Bobby Haas, singer / songwriter Jill Souble and architect Joshua Prince-Ramus.

Kicking off the morning, Haas persuasively spoke on the topic of global climate change and how he's seen it from his international aerial image shooting of every conceivable landscape — natural and man-made.

Guitar in hand, Souble followed, providing some comedic relief in the form of her clever diddy about the dangers of ultra-conservative Dallas.

Prince-Ramus took to the stage next, exposing his firm's mind-blowing creativity in the formation of the soon-to-be-opened AT&T Performing Arts Center's Dee and Charles Wyly Theater.

Ideas, imagination and interest are abounding!

Stay tuned for more soon...

TEDxSMU BLOG: Session 1 Summary

The morning session of the TED conference has ended and participants are now grabbing boxed lunches and engaging in discussions about the first session's speeches.

Architect Prince-Ramus was followed by a three minute talk from a member of the audience, who performed his poem entitled "An Ode to Pluto."

Next up was David Gallo, whose introductory slide listed him as a Ph.D. with A.D.D. Gallo is a pioneer in ocean exploration, who served as co-expedition leader during an exploration of the RMS Titanic. In his address, he continually put the size of the world's oceans in a new perspective.

"If all of the water in the world were to be removed, the contents would look like the size of a ping pong ball compared to a basketball-sized Earth," said Gallo.

Barely visible on the powerpoint was the speck that represented all of the fresh water on the planet.

He then segued into an appeal to protect the world's oceans, which have been polluted by chemical runoff and over-fishing, he said. The composition of the ocean is changing and we as humans need to understand and correct many of our behaviors regarding water usage.

After lunch, stay tuned for Session Two of TEDxSMU, which begins at one o'clock. Featured speakers include live talks from William Abraham, Art Benjamin, Greg Harper, Rogers Hartmann, Amory Lovins and Aaron Reedy. BL Lacerta and Lewis Warren will performing live music.

TEDxSMU BLOG: Session 2 Summary

"Change Your Thinking" was the theme for the second session of TEDxSMU.

Physicist Amory Lewis was first up, where opened with the claim that climate protection is not costly, but in fact profitable. Recently named one of Time's 100 most influential people of 2009, Lewis' presentation was full of charts and graphs to back up his theory. According to him, if everyone cut their energy consumption by three to four percent, then climate change will begin to slow and eventually stop. Although a scientist by trade, Lewis is also Chairman and Chief Scientist of Rocky Mountain Institute, where he applies business solutions to ecological problems.

Also featured in the session was Rogers Hartmann, who suffers from Dystonia, an incurable brain disorder similar to Parkinson's. She has appeared on Oprah, as well as The Today show, where she tries to raise awareness of the disease. Her appeal to the audience was to see the human being in people with special needs, instead of just the disease. As she exited the stage, Hartmann received the first standing ovation of the day.

After a brief music video of Radiohead's "House of Cards" single, SMU's own professor William Abraham took the podium. Working in the fields of both theology and philosophy, Abraham outlined to the audience his "theory of everything." He believes that people have long been burdened by views of determinism, and that instead we should be more focused on human agency: what we are capable of doing. Searching for empirical implications of such a shift in personal psychology, Abraham has assembled a team of researchers that includes catholics, athiests, buddhists, and people of other faiths.

Session 3 will begin at four o'clock. Featured speakers include William Kamkwamba & Bryan Mealer, Tanya Pinto, Turk Pipkin and Jeff Talley. Also, stay tuned for out review of The Polyphonic Spree, who will be performing at the end of the session!

TEDxSMU BLOG: The Grand Finale

How do you explain the magnitude and power of such an experience as today's inaugural TEDxSMU?

Jumping from inspiration to inspiration, the day wrapped up with Session 3 featuring Malawi hero William Kamkwamba and writer Bryan Mealer, Nobility Project founder Turk Pipkin and the grand finale Polyphonic Spree, to name a few.

Kamkwamba self-educated himself to build his Malawi village a fresh water windmill out of only a few salvaged items from a junkyard.

Pipkin proved the colossal task of world peace, solving hunger and many more issues is as simple as making a personal commitment to change with his foundation The Nobility Project that works with former Nobel Laureates.

Polyphonic Spree erupted into an energetic firework performance, getting even old men in suits to hum the chorus for a cacophonous finale.

We're still reeling from it!

TEDxSMU BLOG: Polyphonic Spree Review

To say the crowd in Caruth Auditorium late Saturday afternoon was a mixed crowd would be an understatement.

Gathered for the initial intent to hear a diverse array of world influencers speak on "What Will Change Everything," the TEDxSMU Polyphonic Spree concert was a spur of the moment, explosive success.

Filing in one by one in their traditional cult-like white robed garb, The Polyphonic Spree took the stage as the last presentation of the day.

The seats were filled primarily with stiff suited Good Old Boys sprinkled in with everyone from college students to former hippies and techie geeks.

Known as an orchestral rock band, the Spree warmed up the crowd with a cover performance catering to the hardest to rock demo in the room: the baby boomers.

With violins, a harp, drums and more breaking into a cacophonous rendition of Paul McCartney's "Live and Let Die," the ice was broken for many as the silhouettes of heads began swaying.

One loan yuppie in his v-neck cashmere and khaki slacks stood up during the next song, "Hold Me Now," and began to move.

The hesitance of the crowd was felt by all looking at their neighbor for the go-ahead to stand up too and be young and free again.

Not long after, it was standing room only as the mixed bag of people bobbed to the beat in a joyfully restrained way.

With a pastoral raising of his hands as if motioning for applause, DeLaughter got the even the middle-agers humming along during the performance of "Light and Day" (of Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind fame).

The psychedelic hit "Together We're Heavy" stole the show though as the orchestra and sound deliberately and dramatically froze mid-song.

Complete and utter stillness and silence overtook the Caruth Auditorium as DeLaughter strung the mic cord in a noose like configuration around his neck and explored each frozen body, mid note on stage.

He playfully pulled on the violinists arm, creating a slow and sour sound that provoked a wave of muffled giggles of uncertainty about what was to come.

Switching to a distortion mic, DeLaughter slowly chanted, "You know the time is right when you reach the..." More silence followed, provoking a palpable anticipation as DeLaughter used his hands to form a crown shape over his head.

As the word "sun" belted out of both he and the band's mouths, symbols clanged and the music peaked.

The song and concert climaxed in harmony with white confetti streamers exploding from both front corners and spewed onto the audience as hands went up to catch the floating strands.

A standing ovation and invitation by DeLaughter to the afterparty at ReelFX studios closed out the show as everyone filed away in astonishment that the Polyphonic Spree managed to turn the stiff upper lip of a small college auditorium into a hippie field of carefree hallucinogenic sounds.

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