

Best of 2012: Notable community events

BY DAILY ARTS STAFF

Published January 10, 2013

PRINT | E-MAIL | LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Earthfest 2012

MORE LIKE THIS

- Best of 2011: Notable community events
- Th'Undergrads produces 'SNL'-inspired 'U' comedy
- University to host the country's first Independent Korean film festival
- One Pause Poetry to unite student and teacher in dual reading

“Earthfest 2012: Party for the Planet” was a carnival of environmental consciousness bringing together students, community organizations and Rufus the University recycling mascot for the betterment of the biosphere. On Sep. 20, the Diag filled with booths displaying information and inspiration on campus sustainability in four action areas: climate action, waste prevention, healthy environments and community awareness. Students may have been enticed to attend by free locally-produced snacks, games and prizes, but were ultimately introduced to organizations and initiatives supporting a greener campus. Earthfest participants had many memorable experiences. They made their own self-watering planters, pedaled UM-engineered bikes to generate power, wrote personal sustainability pledges and sampled delicious locally-grown foods in creative culinary demonstrations. The event, originally titled Energyfest, has been held for 17 years and has increased significantly in size, scope and student

involvement.

-JULIA KLINE

“Meet Me At UMMA”

Once monthly docents of the University of Michigan Museum of Art transform their gallery into a theater, a creative workshop and a multi-sensory art experience. The program, titled “Meet Me At UMMA,” engages elderly individuals living with Alzheimer's in a multi-sensory art experience. The participants sing, sketch, smell rich Indian spices and feel the luxurious fabric of a Japanese obi. The idea behind the program is that, while the memory of an Alzheimer's patient may be impaired, their senses remain almost entirely intact. Patients who once seemed catatonic, come alive in the experience of viewing and creating works of art. “Meet Me At UMMA” was developed by a group of UMMA docents and Ruth Slavin, the UMMA's Director of Education and modeled after an innovative program at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. For Alzheimer's patients with limited autonomy, art making allows them to recapture freedom through self-expression.

-JULIA KLINE

“Th'Undergrads”

With the continuing exodus of “Saturday Night Live” greats like Andy Samberg, Abby Elliot and Kristin Wiig, comedy lovers are forced to turn elsewhere to find skits worth watching. But this year, a small group of ambitious University undergraduates decided to take the laughs into their own hands as Th'Undergrads, a diverse collection of actors, comedians and otherwise hilarious students. With the ultimate goal of performing live for campus audiences, Th'Undergrads began releasing monthly half-hour internet episodes filled with original content and even some nudges at University faculty (we certainly won't forget dominatrix Mary Sue Coleman any time soon!). Maneuvering around piles of schoolwork and an awkward shooting schedule, the group continues to publish their final product on YouTube, complete with its own catchy opening – and while 2012 proved a promising springboard for the fledgling comedy sketch group, 2013 is sure to provide “U” viewers with even more laughs.

-LAUREN CASERTA

State of the Book

On Oct. 6, a convocation of acclaimed authors and literature enthusiasts celebrated the vibrant literary history of the state of Michigan, by declaring it the State of the Book. The day-long symposium showcased the amazing array of

talents Michigan has to offer. It began with an introduction from superstar author Dave Eggers, known for his brilliant memoir, “A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.” State of the Book concluded with a dialog between Pulitzer Prize-winner Phillip Levine and celebrated novelist and former University professor Charles Baxter. In between, students affiliated with 826michigan, a youth creative writing organization, read from their newly-released ‘Omnibus’ anthology. A panel discussion featuring poets, novelists and essayists from around the state considered Michigan’s contribution to literature. Many of the most important non-profit organizations from the Detroit and Ann Arbor areas were also present. Teen participants from the Neutral Zone in Ann Arbor and InsideOut Literary Arts Project in Detroit performed their poetry.

-JULIA KLINE

“ZASTANA ”

Every year the Indian American Student Association gets together to put on a spectacular show filled with traditional and contemporary Indian songs and dances. This year, IASA chose the theme ZASTANA: The Pulse of Our Generation to showcase dances from different cultural influences. The show was filled with 222 IASA members boogying to nine unique dances ranging from jazz to Bollywood. The mix of westernized dances and traditional Indian dances came together to create an intriguing show for everyone to enjoy. Months of preparation went into planning and rehearsal, which leaves no doubt as to why it is on our best of 2012 list.

-ARIELLE SPECINER

“Yasujiro Ozu Japanese film series ”

Basically, a Professor of Asian Cinema, through diligent effort and community collaboration, was able to organize a global first at the University. Yes, you read correctly. The casual, everyday Ann Arbor film-goer was able to witness a global first in cinema. The event was a Japanese Film Series featuring a practitioner of the all-but-lost art form of the benshi. Never before outside of Japan has a whole series been dedicated to this art form, which involved a live performing narrator-lecturer who played all the roles and added narration to silent films. This was no amateur practitioner; the event showcased the veteran talents of Ichiro Kataoka. With talks about the dwindling presence of Ann Arbor’s film culture in the air, this was definitely a sign that the community is nevertheless still organizing and investing in the art of cinema.

-JOHN BOHN

Korean Film Festival

In October 2012 Ann Arbor hosted the first ever Independent Korean Film Festival in the United States. The festival featured nine of the most diverse and creative films produced in Korea, brought in and selected by Screen Arts and Cultures postdoctoral research fellow, Sangjoon Lee. The films represented all types of Korean films ranging from a flick about strolling down memory lane to one about Korean architecture. The festival was the first of its kind and gave film fanatics a glimpse into a different type of cinema. Hopefully it will continue to evolve into an Ann Arbor tradition.

-ARIELLE SPECINER

Persian Student Association New Year

We all know time is a construct. Hours, minutes, seconds – they’re all inventions of the rational mind. Each culture tends to have its own way of dividing up the movement of the celestial bodies. And that’s great, because each new calendar means another way to celebrate the New Year! For those involved with the Persian Student Association, this means celebrating the Iranian New Year. For the last 14 years they’ve done this through a cultural show, providing a window into Persian culture through dance, fashion and humor. After every show, students of the PSA find that their performance has helped audience members clarify their perceptions of a culture little understood these days and relatively obfuscated by media portrayal. However, this year’s event was of an added historical-cultural significance as the PSA reached out to the newly-formed Iraqi Student Association, a gesture that went against the two culture’s history of conflict.

-JOHN BOHN

One Pause Poetry

Local Detroit legend, relentless publisher of the Alternative Press, and close friend of Allen Ginsburg, Ken Mikolowski reunited with an old student to do a dual reading at One Pause Poetry. Professor Mikolowski teaches creative writing courses and tutorials through the Residential College. Matt Rohrer, a student of Professor Mikolowski, won the National Poetry Series award for his first compilation of poems and is now on the creative writing faculty at NYU. For those that have somehow missed this side of Ann Arbor, the poetry scene is alive and thriving and channeled through a great multitude of clubs and organizations like One Pause Poetry. The event was a great chance to see people who are truly dedicated to and have invested an immense amount of time and energy into the art form.

-JOHN BOHN

FestiFools

Certainly one of the city's most popular and recognizable traditions, FestiFools celebrated its sixth annual takeover of Ann Arbor's streets this year. As a colorful collection of puppeteers, puppet enthusiasts, musicians and curious residents gathered to enjoy the sights and sounds of the iconic festival, they were once again greeted by the ear-to-ear smiles of massive paper maché puppets created by local students and community members. The multi-day celebration even included a foray into nighttime fun known as FoolMoon, a whimsical street procession featuring hundreds of handmade luminaries whose handlers were released to roam the streets at dusk. Art installations, musical performances, games and more greeted onlookers searching out some daytime fun as they mingled with the larger-than-life puppets that have become unexpectedly familiar faces to Ann Arborites. With the festival growing bigger and better each year, past attendees are already awaiting the festival's 2013 return.

-LAUREN CASERTA