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IT'S NEW. IT'S HOT, and it's in Frisco. Words echoed from the mouths of new-age poets at the local poetry slam will penetrate the routine of your daily life and bring a fresh perspective, a didactic message designed to make you stop, drop and roll open your mind to new possibilities. Bask in sultry and supple spoken prose, and let it settle down like gentle snowflakes of solemnity into your brain or allow the words' searing images to awaken ideals slumbering deep within your soul. This nouveau oral couture, a fresh kind of poetry, is filled with rhythm, intensity, and a riveting performance element and is available quarterly at Collin County Community College District (Collin).

Perhaps the most unique characteristic about the slams is that they are a community experience. Anyone can participate and judges are selected randomly from the audience. Hosted by the student group, Sounds of Articulate Poets (SOAP), the slams have simple rules that include a three-minute poem limit and no props. The poem topic is open, and poetry can be read from a notebook or recited from memory. In the college's intimate Cougar Den setting, poets are scored on performance as well as the spoken word.

According to Scott Yarbrough, Collin English professor and director of the Honors Institute, slams take the boring out of poetry.

"Slammers see sharing poetry as a performance art, mixing spoken word with performance level energy.



SOAP members, Brandon Jordan, Misty Boldish, Devon Boyd

photo by Nick Young

Message in a Microphone

By Heather Darrow

Writers, like other artists, are often forced to wait to see if their art does indeed communicate by affirmation with publication. The slam provides a venue that is more immediate and requires involvement on the part of both the poet and the listener. You are sometimes surprised at one turn of phrase or topic or direction of someone that makes you realize how much prejudice and stereotyping you bring with you to the event. It also reinforces scholarly posture; when good art happens and you get to see it, digest it and carry it home with you, that is what ultimately matters,"

Professor Yarbrough said.

SOAP members were recently selected to perform at the Dallas Urban Arts Festival. In addition, they battled against university poetry teams at the regional Association of College Unions International poetry slam competition, advanced to national competition and had the opportunity to perform for renowned poet Saul Williams.

According to Mr. Williams on an MTVU video clip, "John Keats said that poets are the midwives of reality. Just to say that something is being born, perhaps the first to grasp it and to welcome it into the world is often the poet that articulates it."

To get into what he describes as a poetic state, SOAP member Devon Boyd listens to Saul Williams' CDs. Although when the muses strike without provocation, he writes poetry on anything he can find including napkins, receipts, or even himself.

"I haven't gotten to the extreme of clothes yet, but I'm pretty sure

I will one day because even if it is one little line it may come in handy later," Devon said.

Devon, or Lyrical Instrumentalist as he is known on stage, is an audio engineering student who ultimately wants to own his own recording company. He and his fellow SOAP team members feel strongly about literacy and volunteer to combat the problem.

"Did you know that 21 percent of adult Americans, 40-44 million people, are functionally illiterate and read below a fifth grade level and an additional 25 percent, or 50 million people, are



SOAP member, Devon Boyd
photo by Nick Young

marginally illiterate? We help people overcome stage fright, improve their presentation and literacy skills and most importantly help them to express themselves,” Devon said.

Collin slammer Misty Boldish, or Sullen on stage, is earning an associate of applied science degree in interpreter preparation. Her fluency in American Sign Language gives her poetry a different flavor.

“Frisco is one of the fastest growing cities, and in a fast-paced society you need someone you can listen to in order to slow things down a little bit. In a slam, all of the energy from the crowd comes into you, you use it, and it all comes back out. You feel like you are energy and not a person, and the energy purges out onto the audience and the audience feeds on that,” Misty said.

Most people know Frisco resident and Collin slammer Brandon Jordan as a full-time real estate closer or student, but on the stage he is known as Fallacy, a person that the

crowd does not really know. Brandon describes the slam environment as a reflection of his generation in a different light.

“We are an MTV culture, but SOAP is influenced by what is going on in our own minds. It is an opportunity to say here’s what I think about what is going on in society. The beauty of the human being is that no moment is the same. Slams are communication with a clear mindset. Try to leave behind your perceptions before you attend or be ready to have them torn down. Be prepared to be warped into a new time zone,” Brandon said.

The slam provides a venue that is immediate and requires involvement on the part of both the poet and the listener.

The next poetry slam will be held Thursday, June 15 from 7-9 p.m. in the Cougar Den at Collin’s Preston Ridge Campus in Frisco. Those curious about expanding their minds and their view of poetry are encouraged to attend.

Heather Darrow is a writer for Collin County Community College District.