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# The Elm

ELM STORIES

## Singing Their Praises at the Fifth Annual 'UMB's Got Talent' Show

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Singers, spoken-word artists, and others from the University community showcase their performing and artistic skills at the fifth annual event.

*Photo: School of Pharmacy student Arnelle Etienne sings the song "Berlin" by RY X at the "UMB's Got Talent" show April 9. (Photo by Matthew D'Agostino)*

The "UMB's Got Talent" show is open to all kinds of performers — singers, musicians, dancers, comedians, et al — but you might think it would be hard to find a wealth of such talent on the campus of a health and human services university.

Think again. Twelve performing acts proved April 9 that the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) indeed does "got" talent by entertaining an audience at MSTF Leadership Hall in the annual talent show, which is sponsored by the UMB Staff Senate, Faculty Senate, University Student Government Association, Office of the Provost, Department of Environmental Services, and Council for the Arts & Culture.

Two singers and a spoken-word artist stole the show, earning the top three spots in the audience voting. Arnelle Etienne, a student at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy (UMSOP), took top honors for her rendition of "Berlin," a song by Australian singer RY X. There were two runners-up: Olaoluwa "Ollie" Adebajo, a student at the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), and Borndavid McCraw, assistant director of youth and family programs for URecFit and Wellness, UMB.

*Photo: From left, Olaoluwa "Ollie" Adebajo, Arnelle Etienne, and Borndavid McCraw. (Photo by Matthew D'Agostino)*



Etienne is a student in the Master of Science in Medical Cannabis Science and

Therapeutics program at UMSOP and vice president of the UMB Medical Cannabis Student Association. She grew up in Montgomery County, Md., before going to college out of state and coming back to Maryland to live in Baltimore in 2024. Her performance was touted as "a song about returning home."

She said she grew up singing in her church and has sung for almost all of her life, so she was used to performing in front of an audience, though this was her first time in front of the UMB community.

"I was honestly shocked to win first place but so happy to be among so many talented performers," Etienne said. "The other performers were amazing. I'm in an online program at UMB, so I don't have a lot of on-campus interaction. I've been searching for more ways to be involved and meet my peers. Entering this talent showcase was another attempt to connect with the UMB community, so it was such a blessing and surprise to win."

Earlier, Adebajo had wowed the crowd with her rendition of the hit song "Million Years Ago" by English superstar Adele.

"Ollie has been a singer her whole life, and performing this Adele song as a solo performer today is something a little bit different for her," said Dana Rampolla, director of integrated marketing, Office of Communications and Public Affairs, who served as emcee of the event. "Ollie sang in a lot of ensembles and choirs when she was growing up, and it has been on her bucket list to do a solo performance."

McCraw, who was performing under the stage name "Em Sea Water" and has been involved with the Maryland State Arts Council as a volunteer, delivered an original spoken-word poem and paeon to his hometown titled "Oh, Baltimore."

"Borndavid derives his stage name from water, which has the natural ability to reflect his surroundings, the way he will be doing this evening," said Rampolla, who is a member of UMB's arts council. "So like the ocean naturally reflects the sun, his poetry is openly transparent."

McCraw's poem includes lyrics such as "It's where we catch a hack instead of calling a cab. Cab Calloway used to dance with Billie Holiday. And they say Hasim Rahman gave Lennox Lewis a black eye ... Susan" and "Fells Point — that's where Frederick Douglass used to work the harbor, days before Orioles had a bullpen in Camden or even in Memorial Stadium. You see, back then, both them and Edgar Allan's Ravens were just birds." He closed with "It's Baltimore. It's our city. It's the greatest city in America."



Other singing performances included:

- Dani Ciscell, staff, University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON), “Pink Pony Club” by Chappell Roan
- Sean “Scoe Romero” Driscoll, staff, UMSOM, “Be You,” original song, a cappella
- Kurt Espinosa, student, UMSOM, “Couch Surfin’,” original song, with guitar accompaniment
- Elizabeth Kartal, MSN, CNM, faculty, UMSOM, “The Wizard and I” from “Wicked”
- Allison Keyes, DDS '24, resident, and Rebecca Lopez, student, both from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), “Gratitude” by Brandon Lake
- Mcke Kittrell, student, University of Maryland School of Social Work, “The Only Exception” by Paramore
- Cata Nolan, staff, UMSOD, “Grow,” original song

The two other performers were Komal Bhagat, UMSOM staff, who did a classical Indian dance titled “Bollywood,” and Joshua Hitch, UMB staff, who played Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Cello Suite No. 1” on a mandolin.

The event also included a Crafted Creations gallery set up outside the hall’s entrance that featured artwork from three staff members — Latisha Brown, UMB; Lei Zhang, UMSOM; and Oacia Fair, UMSOP — and a member of the local community, Nathaniel Ervin, who paints under the name “NACIR The Younger.” Brown, Ervin, and Fair took turns on stage during the show to discuss their art, and the audience ranked them Nos. 1 to 3, respectively, in voting on the art exhibits.

“I was so impressed by all of our performers and artists tonight,” Rampolla said. “This show is such a great opportunity to connect with new faces at UMB and to uncover the hidden talents of people we may see every day. The range of creative expression here is incredible—it’s inspiring not only to watch the performances, but also to see how each artist stays to support one another throughout the entire show, no matter when their turn comes. This is what they call ‘Artists helping artists.’”

UMSON staff member Ray Stolle, MA, of the Staff Senate, who co-chaired the event’s planning committee with Vivian Hill-Lawson, a UMB staff member, said this fifth edition of UMB’s talent show might have been the best yet.

“It’s hard to compare events year after year, because each lineup has talent, but while last year’s performances were all very good, I think the performance levels were even a few notches higher this year,” Stolle said in remarks to conclude the event.

*Photo: Tiffany Brown, a lead medical assistant at the School of Medicine, shows a sign of support for her friend, Elizabeth Kartal, left, who sang “The Wizard and I” at the “UMB’s Got Talent” show. (Photo by Matthew D’Agostino)*

