

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 23, 2015

STEAMworks Wows Audiences

IRVINE, California—February 21, 2016

Hundreds of people packed the Marcus D. Hurlbut Theatre at St. Margaret's Episcopal School on Sunday, February 21st to view a unique and equally sensational production, STEAMworks 2016. The show was an unlikely mix of a student-run event and a packed theatre production that led to outstanding results. Audiences were treated to two acts packed with inspirational voices in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics or STEAM.

The production wove together diverse presentation topics into a coherent narrative about the power of STEAM in our society. The presenters and cast included Dr. David Reinkensmeyer, a UCI professor of Engineering and leader of groundbreaking research of rehabilitative medicine. His presentation included his research on allowing stroke victims to regain motor neuron usage. Next up were two students who pioneered a project at St. Margaret's called limbART, Sahar Khashayar and Ashley Lee. Following them was dancer Michelle Kim, a Northwood High School sophomore celebrating the oft overlooked arts in the STEAM acronym. Youth Speaker Lia Tian, who followed Michelle, said that the event was "incredibly unique" after speaking about her journey through mathematics. Finally, Northwood High junior Thomas Bong performed his "Orbit Lightshow."

Act Two was largely comprised of the performance of featured speaker and presenter, Dr. Arthur Benjamin, the world-renowned Mathemagician. An audience member remarked about his performance, "It wasn't what I expected. I thought he was going to talk much more about difficult to understand math mechanics but I was on the edge of my seat for the whole hour. It was amazing!" The famous magician and professor was a sensational performer and the audience of over 300 thoroughly enjoyed his show.

Behind the scenes of both acts of this sensational production was Neah Lekan, a University High School sophomore, emcee, public speaker, and theatre student who worked behind the scenes to invite Dr. Benjamin and the rest of the cast in addition to working with the crew to bring the show to life. "I was inspired by TED Talks and the impact that meaningful yet manageable speeches can have on people," Lekan said about his inspiration for the event. When asked about how the event was organized Lekan stated, "It was a lot of hard work from a lot of great people. The volunteers were fantastic and the crew worked with me to write stage directions, rehearse, and create an absolutely stunning production. The OC Science Board members helped promote the event and it thanks to their efforts that we had a great audience. One crew member

stated that, “being on crew helped me experience theatre and STEAM in a whole new light. It was a very engaging experience.”

Neah Lekan summed up the event by saying, “Overall it was a two fold success. On the one hand we put on an incredible show which promoted STEAM and inspired the audience to go out and “shift innovation into high gear” in addition to having a dedicated crew setting, striking, and running the tech the entire, and on the other it allowed high school students like myself who normally would not have the experience to run a production like STEAMworks. We had an amazing time and I’ve learned tremendously from my crew, collaborators, and colleagues.

STEAMworks 2016 raised thousands for STEAM outreach efforts and inspired a new generation to walk out the house doors at the Hurlbut Theatre that afternoon and discover the world around them, break down barriers, reach for new horizons, and shift innovation into high gear.

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