

TEDxUNCAshville prepares for club's upcoming event

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After a year and a half of planning, TEDxUNCAshville's largest event sold out in 24 hours.

Independent from TED Talks, TEDx is a way for people around the world to organize their own events and conferences. TEDxUNCAshville, assembled eight years ago, is a self-sufficient group, organized and funded by students involved.

"Our theme this year is *Love, Music and Other Drugs*, and it started out as a way for us to explore what people are passionate about and what drives them to do what they do and how love and music and these sorts of passions are like drugs to us," said Taylor Beyrer, junior psychology student and current president of TEDxUNCAshville.

Beyrer said the concept for this event took root in the fall 2016. She made the decision as president to take her time building her team and preparing for the large event with smaller talks.

It was not until 2017 that the team decided to officially plan the event.

Love, Music and Other Drugs started as one concrete concept but expanded over the preparation period.

Recently, the club decided to incorporate the theme of recovery into the event, which divides into four sessions: intoxication, fixation, dependency and recovery.

"We're really going on that journey of what is it like to become intoxicated, to love something that much and then all the way through to how do you recover from loving something so much that it takes over your entire life or you're attached to something to a certain extent," Beyrer said.

The only student speaker at this event will be Forest Gamble, a senior new media and German student.

"My talk is about breaking down fake news and how propaganda works, and then the census of my



PHOTO BY ELIJAH LAPLANTE

Robin Russell Gaiser performs a portion of her upcoming speech at an event last November.

talk is that I urge people to create their own propaganda in order to combat institutional propaganda and I go through different principles and methods of doing that," Gamble said. "So it's about basically destroying the fake news apparatus by creating fake news."

Gamble explained the process of preparing his speech as intensive. He began writing his script in October and has since gone through 11 drafts, cutting his 15-page script down to six-and-a-half pages.

"It goes from very broad ideas like, 'I want to give a talk on propaganda,' and then they're like 'OK, what exactly about that do you want to talk about?' And then we had to pare it down and they really worked

with us to make sure the talk was good," Gamble said.

Outreach coordinator Tessa Friesen, a sophomore health and wellness promotion student, also helped train the speakers.

Friesen helped during the process of interviewing, choosing and training the speakers, including Gamble, UNCA staff, faculty and Asheville community members.

"Once we finally determined our speakers, it was just a process of 'How can we best curate your talk and narrate it so that the most amount of people benefit from it?' So that was a really interesting time to try and figure out 'How can you boil these really, really intense topics down to very simple, under-

standable concepts for the masses?'" Friesen said.

Beyrer said she really wanted this event to stand out from all the others, which led to the creation of Project X.

Project X was a collaboration between both TEDxUNCAshville and the STEAM studio. The STEAM studio cut out 150 large foam X's and the goal is to have all of them decorated. The X's were then delivered to schools in the Asheville community, organizations on campus and several which were left in buckets for artists to pick up.

"We'll string them up and have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18