LIFE

AMERICA'S GOT TALENT WINNER VENTRILOQUIST TERRY FATOR PERFORMS AT UCONN

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Terry Fator walks through the audience with a Kermit The Frog puppet. Terry Fator came to his event with a number of puppets, each used for a separate act.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER / THE DAILY CAMPUS

The lines between ventriloquism, stand-up comedy and music were blurred at former America's Got Talent winner Terry Fator's Family Weekend act at the University of Connecticut on Saturday, Sept. 26.

Fator's new show "Pure Imagination: Once Upon a Voice" introduced some of his most famous puppets, including Winston the Impersonating Turtle and Emma Taylor, the puppet who sang Etta James' "At Last" for his 2007 AGT audition, to Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts.

Each puppet's origins were explained, including Fator's first professional ventriloquist dummy Walter T. Airdale, who he purchased when he was 18 years old.

The flirtatious southern man Airdale picked on a couple seated in the front row throughout his set, creating some of the most memorable moments of the show.

The puppet gave a yodeling performance and made suggestive comments, some bordering on vulgar, which naturally provoked both gasps and laughs from the audience.

Mary Grace Webb, the woman Airdale made passes on, said the experience was exciting and fun.

"He didn't make me feel uncomfortable or anything of that nature," she said.

Puppet Julius, who sang a soulful cover of Bill Withers' "Ain't No Sunshine," also directed jokes at the couple, and puppet Vikki the Cougar flirted with Webb's husband Adrian "Webb" Webb.

The couple are longtime fans of Fator and saw his Las Vegas show at The Mirage about 10 years ago.

Airdale and Vikki delivered some of the more outrageous jokes of the evening — notably Vikki's cover of Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'," with lyrics changed to "These boobs are made for gawking" — but were received well by audience members.

Emma Yale, a first-semester speech, language and hearing sciences major, noted Vikki as her favorite puppet, and said she was surprised by the raunchiness of the show, but that she and her parents had a great time.

"I absolutely loved it," Yale said.

Later in the evening, Fator performed two songs alone on stage, both pertaining to more serious subject matter than any of the puppets' numbers.

The first, "Horses in Heaven," is an original about a 6-year-old boy who died after a fight with cancer. Fator said he wrote it late one night in his hotel room while competing on AGT after hearing the boy's story from his best friend Bobby's mother.

Fator said "Horses in Heaven" is "a song about hope," and said that the song will remain in his set permanently.

Before performing a cover of "Bring Him Home" from the musical "Les Misérables," Fator recognized first responders, military personnel and veterans, asking them to stand while thanking them for their service.

He also introduced the Terry Fator Foundation and said that 100% of his merchandise profits enter the foundation to support disabled veterans and first responders.

Over the course of the night, Fator sang opera, soul, country and iconic hits from Elvis Presley (via the "world's greatest Elvis impersonator" puppet Maynard Thompkins), showing off his range of talent through each puppet persona.

He ended the night with a rendition of the 1985 U.S.A. for Africa performance of "We Are the World," impersonating 19 different artists, including Michael Jackson, Willie Nelson and Tina Turner, through miniature hand-sized puppets.

Mary Grace Webb said "We Are the World" was a highlight of the show.

"People don't realize what an exceptional singer he is," she said about Fator.

Fator urged the audience to listen closely to the lyrics of the song. He said that the words are more relevant today than ever.

Before leaving the stage, Fator said that he may return to Connecticut this year for his "A Very Terry Christmas Tour" after the November release of his debut novel "Marley," which is a reimagined version of "A Christmas Carol."



Acclaimed ventriloquist Terry Fator performed songs, comedy sketches, and monologues for a packed crowd. Fator won America's Got Talent 2007 and has been performing for over 20 years.

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