

# McGill holds stand-up auditions

*Comedians look to recruit students performers for contest*

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A&E Editor

Montreal is Canada's home for comedy. Over the years, the Just For Laughs comedy festival has featured some of the world's greatest comic icons, while also providing an outlet for local talent to perform. Within that home-grown talent is Jeff Schouela, a six-year stand-up comedy veteran who is holding auditions for McGill students to compete in a series of amateur stand-up competitions.

"The main thing about the contest is that it's open to people who have never performed stand-up before," says Schouela.

Auditions will take place over two days at Gert's. If the thought of performing in front of a crowd has your stomach in knots already, rest assured that the auditions are being held in front of a panel of three judges instead of a typical audience. Each contestant will be asked to perform four to six minutes of material before being evaluated by the judges.

Eight to 12 students will be selected to compete in a McGill vs. Concordia night at Comedyworks. Afterwards, the contest will begin with a series of stand-up shows that will run over four to five weeks at Comedyworks, from mid-May to mid-June. McGill students will compete against students from Concordia, Dawson College, John Abbott College, and Marionopolis. Each show will feature eight to 10 contestants performing between four to six minutes of material. Each week, two winners will be selected to compete in the finals. When the finals are over, the winners will be entered into Montreal's Hilarious, a contest open to all amateur comedians with a yet-to-be-determined cash prize where the winner will be decided by both the judges and the audience.

No strangers to the stage themselves, Schouela and his co-producer Eman understand the anxiety involved with performing in front of a crowd, yet they are optimistic about

the student turnout.

"I think it's inherent in a lot of people to a) be funny, or b) try stand-up comedy," says Schouela. "There are a lot of competitions for comedy in the city, but I think it's a little too intimidating for newcomers to want to join those things knowing that they're going to be performing with professionals."

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Schouela designed the contest to give each performer a chance to polish their material and get comfortable performing on stage before competing in Montreal's Hilarious. This is the first year for both contests, but he hopes to make each an annual event.

Schouela's own stand-up routine won me over with a joke about the "Toronto dream" being "a condo and an empty relationship." Offstage, Schouela produced *The Best of Montreal* comedy show and album last summer (which featured a recording by Schouela), as well as co-producing an upcoming show called "We Ain't Terrorists." Eman produces a comedy show every month at Comedyworks for up-and-coming comics.

While performing stand-up comedy is certainly not for everyone, it is an often-underappreciated form of entertainment that requires a lot of creativity and even more courage. If the thought of making a group of strangers laugh doesn't make you light-headed like me, then this is your chance to shine. Who knows, you could be the next Russell Peters. Or, you could be funny.

*Auditions will be held on March 25 and 26, from 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. at Gerts.*