New UBC pep song
something to cheer about

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

The best part of UBC’s new pep song may very well be the shouting.

“It’s pretty easy to sing along,” says composer Steve Chatman, a professor in the UBC School of Music. “You just have to remember to shout ‘hail.’”

That UBC even has a pep song – let alone a newly recorded one – may prompt some surprise. University

fight songs are rare in Canada, where the tradition isn’t held as dear as in the United States. At UBC, an older version of Hail UBC that’s been kicking around since the 1930s wasn’t even suitable to be played over the loudspeakers at games.

This proved troubling to UBC associate athletic director Steve Tuckwood and former athletic director Bob Hindmarch, who last year began asking around for a new version of “Hail UBC.”

They quickly found Chatman, a Juno-nominated and internationally renowned composer, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of traditional fight songs.

“They set up a meeting, and about five minutes in, Steve said, ‘You’re looking for something like this?’ He went over to a piano and started playing every fight song he knew,” Tuckwood says. “He just knew them all.”

And while one may think a pep song composed in 2009 would be a more modern take on the traditional format,

Native cultures and their plant seeds could be keys to addressing crises of food, medicine and energy, coping with climate change, and easing unprecedented rates of species extinction, according to Tirso Gonzales, an assistant professor of Indigenous Studies at UBC

Okanagan.

“The dominant Westernized worldview tells us that nature has endless resources, and so we have unsustainable ways of living and doing agriculture in an era of oil addiction,” says Gonzales. “That worldview is in crisis, and that’s why we are looking for sustainability. There is great potential for Indigenous peoples to make important contributions to the world today.”

A former Fulbright scholar with a PhD in sociology, Gonzales recently served as the Latin America and Caribbean lead author on the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), a four-year, $11-million project funded by the World Bank and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

Published this year, the IAASTD five-volume report Agriculture at a Crossroads examines how science, technology and Indigenous knowledge can be used to reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and promote development that is sustainable for the environment, societies and economies.

UBC Okanagan professor Tirso Gonzales is planning a new Indigenous Centre of the Americas and Pacific Rim to foster intercultural dialogue on Indigenous cultures.

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The Golden Mean has earned three major awards. Writing instructor now doing "The Golden Mean is a fictionalized story of Aristotle's childhood up to the time when he became a tutor to the boy who would become Alexander the Great, notes Canwest News Service."

"The novel is a nominee for the Governor General’s prize for fiction, made the longlist for the $50,000 Scotiabank Giller Prize and is a finalist for the $25,000 Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. Lyon, a UBC alumna, was interviewed by the Globe and Mail, The Canadian Press, the Vancouver Sun and CBC.

"The study attacks the Harper government for adopting an amateur and "alarming" document that ignores human rights, gives the false impression that crime is rising, and provides no costs for flawed policies that would flood prisons, with more inmates, reported Canwest News Service."

"With no public review or consultation, the plethora of recommendations - some good, some trivial, but many with draconian implications for the protection of human rights, public safety and the public purse, are being presented as the future of federal corrections in Canada," Jackson and Steward wrote. The Canadian Press, CBC, the Vancouver Sun and the Edmonton Sun also reported on the study."

Canadians uncover cancer map

The possibility of using a patient's genetic information to create personalized therapies to battle cancer is one step closer to reality after UBC and other Canadian scientists decoded, for the first time, the entire genome of a patient's metastatic breast cancer, reported the Globe and Mail.

"The newspaper called it "a landmark achievement that sheds light on how cancer develops and provides new insights into how to fight it."

"I'm excited by the possibilities," said Samuel Aparicio, Canada research chair in molecular oncology, the Nan and Lorraine Robertson chair of breast-cancer research at UBC, and one of the lead scientists involved with the study."

"In fact, I never thought I would see in my professional lifetime that it would become possible to routinely sequence genomes in the way that we're now doing."

The findings were also heralded by Reuters, AFP, Associated Press, the Los Angeles Times, The Canadian Press and Canwest News Service.

Golden Mean turns heads

Author and UBC Creative Writing instructor Annabel Lyon has earned three major award nominations for her debut novel, The Golden Mean.

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Lynch goes to your brain

"Surrealism may be good for Lynch, director of Blue Velvet and Eraserhead, or reading a Franz Kafka short story, can improve sense of the world," said a UBC professor of psychology. "If you encounter something that you can't relate [to other things], that you don't know what to do with it, this sort of puts you off your game and you need to search for a referencing point again to find some structure."

Prison plan slammed

UBC Law Prof. Michael Jackson made a national splash with a report that slams the federal government's plan to "toughen" Canada's prison system.

The report, co-authored with a former director of the John Howard Society, argues the government is ignoring "more than a century of correctional and legal history," empirical research and the recommendations of "inquiries and royal commissions" in its blueprint to overhaul federal prisons.

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study published in the journal Psychological Science and covered by international media including the New York Times, the Times of India and the Globe and Mail.

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The report points out a range of environmental impacts from agricultural practices around the world today, noting:

- Approximately 1.5 billion people are directly affected by land degradation.
- Deforestation is proceeding at 13 million hectares per year.
- Over half of the world’s grasslands are degraded or destroyed.
- Depletion of marine resources is so severe that some comeons of small-scale agricultural producers.

Achieving this will require a new kind of socio-ecological system that spans the gulf between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures – and that’s where Gonzales is focusing his attention.

"Indigenous culture is an undervalued, diminished and marginalized reservoir of knowledge," says Gonzales, citing colonization and a still-pervasive colonial mentality as major influences around the world. "We can’t be entrenched in our own way of viewing the world – we need an intercultural dialogue."

Born and raised in Peru, Gonzales sees himself as an Aymara person, who has a rich cultural tradition of rituals and local knowledge and lore.

Last December, Gonzales began a pilot research project collaborating with Peruvian Andean-Amazonian Indigenous peoples’ local organizations. The project is supported by UBC’s Martha Piper Research Fund and emphasizes interdisciplinary, intercultural dialogue and exchange, as well as gathering data and mapping of agricultural local knowledge and lore.

Gonzales envisions a new Indigenous Centre of the Americas and Pacific Rim to promote and endorse the Indigenous peoples’ agenda as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He says the centre would work to strengthen dialogue within and between cultures, and provide for training, exchange, education, and dissemination of information and research outcomes for key stakeholders such as Indigenous peoples, governments, the private sector, and civil society at large.

"Where the seed goes, where genetic material goes, it goes with culture, place and language," he says. "We need society, policy makers and institutions to be flexible enough to respond to the challenge. If not, we will continue to exclude people in large numbers from being who they are and from contributing to enriching sustainable, place-based agricultural cultures."

The IAASTD reports Agriculture at a Crossroads are available from www.agassessment.org or www.islandpress.org/iaastd.
UBC students and some of Vancouver’s homeless are composing music for gamelan – an orchestra of traditional Indonesian instruments – in a unique music course.

Making beautiful music in the Downtown Eastside

BY BA SIL WAU GH

A UBC music researcher is teaching the world’s first university course on musical expressions in a Canadian inner city. The class will help more than 30 UBC music students to learn about music in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and to showcase the musical talents of neighbourhood residents.

Heart of the City: Introduction to Applied Ethnomusicology is taught by Klisala Harrison, a postdoctoral teaching and research fellow in UBC’s School of Music who has researched inner city music in the area and around Canada for the past nine years.

“Music plays an important role in regenerating socioeconomically depressed urban areas,” says Harrison, 34. “It can build trust, self-esteem and a positive sense of community. For some, it is a tool for emotional, psychological and physical survival.”

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More UBC students volunteer for community service learning in 2010

“...people face every day. It really re-energized me.”

BY BASIL WAUGH

UBC student Anushka Samarawickrama is looking forward to the 2010 spring break so she can hang out with some special friends.

But you won’t find them dancing in any Fort Lauderdale conga lines this Olympic year. She and her buds are reuniting in the same place their unique relationship started one year ago: an elementary school on Vancouver’s Eastside.

Samarawickrama’s pals are the kids, teachers and fellow UBC students that she met last year during a powerful volunteer experience at Franklin Elementary. Together they played dodgeball, made fruit smoothies, jumped rope and did fun math problems in a school-wide effort to improve nutrition, fitness and learning skills.

They connected through the UBC Learning Exchange, which has been putting UBC student volunteers into schools and non-profit organizations in the Downtown Eastside and other Vancouver inner city neighborhoods since 1999.

True to the program’s name, Samarawickrama says the lessons went both ways.

“Seeing up close the impact I had on these young, people really moved me,” says the second-year arts student, who worked with seven boys in various grades. “There was so much that I learned, especially about the adversity some people face every day. It was a really new environment for me, but I had a lot of fun. It actually really re-energized me for school.”

This year, UBC’s annual reading break for Vancouver campus students has been extended to two weeks – from February 15 to 26 – to help accommodate the concurrent 2010 Winter Games.

Many projects will have Olympic themes to help connect UBC has helped to pioneer in Canada, combines classroom learning with volunteer work to achieve community goals. Already home to the nation’s largest university spring break CSL initiative, UBC is planning for a record turnout in 2010.

As many as 1,000 students, faculty and staff are expected to participate in more than 50 projects in Vancouver schools and non-profit organizations because of the challenges of inner city life, they can’t always pursue them,” says Steve Agabob, principal of Mount Pleasant Elementary School, a five-year UBC Reading Week partner.

“Our students really connect with the UBC students and they produce awesome work together. University suddenly seems like an attainable goal for them. It’s a match made in heaven for us.”

The UBC Learning Exchange’s $1.4 million of HSBC Bank Canada’s recent $2.17 million gift to UBC supports UBC Learning Exchange programs where students volunteer in literacy, math and science projects in Eastside elementary schools.

School-based volunteer teams will be led by UBC staff and senior students as well as employees from SAP Canada (formerly Business Objects), which has also provided financial support for the Reading Week projects.

The Learning Exchange receives support from a variety of UBC partners, including Student Development, Human Resources and External, Legal, and Community Relations.

Learn more and sign-up for a Reading Week 2010 CSL school project at: www.ubc.ca/readingweekprojects.

Get involved in the UBC Winter Games Volunteer Program

Help welcome the world to campus by becoming part of the UBC Winter Games Volunteer Program.

Students, alumni, faculty and staff can volunteer with any one of a number of positions both off and on campus, including Campus Tours, the Learning Exchange Reading Week Program, Library Ambassadors or with the Province of British Columbia at the BC Pavilion or the 2010 Commerces Centre.

Groups with volunteer positions to be filled can post opportunities under the UBC Winter Games Volunteer Program profile on the Career Services CareerOnline website.

To learn more information on how to find or post volunteer opportunities, go to ubc.ca/2010.

The University of British Columbia

FACULTY OF ARTS

UBC KILLAM TEACHING PRIZES

Once again the University is recognizing excellence in teaching through the awarding of prizes to faculty members. Up to six (6) prize winners will be selected in the Faculty of Arts for 2010.

Eligibility: Eligibility is open to faculty who have three or more years of teaching at UBC. The three years include 2009 – 2010.

Criteria: The awards will recognize distinguished teaching at all levels, introductory, advanced, graduate courses, graduate supervision, and any combination of levels.

Nomination Process: Members of faculty, students, or alumni may suggest candidates to the Head of the Department, the Director of the School, or Chair of the Program in which the nominee teaches. These suggestions should be in writing and signed by one or more students, alumni or faculty, and they should include a very brief statement of the basis for the nomination. You may write a letter of nomination or pick up a form from the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts in Buchanan C105.

Deadline: 4:00 p.m. on January 11, 2010. Submit nominations to the Department, School or Program Office in which the nominee teaches.

Winners will be announced in the Spring, and they will be identified during Spring convocation in May.

For further information about these awards contact either your Department, School or Program office, or Dr. Denise Munch, Associate Dean of Arts at (604) 822-6703.
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BY BRIAN KLADKO
Acting Communications Manager,
Faculty of Medicine

Fourteen thousand kilometres separate the UBC Faculty of Medicine from Uganda. Dr. Shafique Pirani is trying to bridge that gap.

A clinical professor in the Department of Orthopedics, Pirani first returned to the country of his youth a decade ago and has made 20 subsequent trips, trying to rid the east African nation of clubfoot, a birth defect in which one or both feet are turned inward and downward.

He has been working not as a practitioner, but as a proselytizer of the Ponseti method, a non-surgical way of curing clubfoot. Originated by U.S. orthopedic specialist, the late Dr. Ignacio Ponseti, the method is the “gold standard” for clubfoot treatment.

It involves gently manipulating a baby’s foot, placing a cast on it, and then repeating the process over several weeks, the flexible cartilage is molded into the proper position and stays put as it becomes bone. Pirani, an orthopedic surgeon at Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, has helped make the Ponseti method the mainstream treatment for clubfoot in North America. But he has been even more

Pirani estimates that about 40 per cent of Ugandan babies born with clubfoot are now being treated in one of those clinics. Many of the other 60 per cent, Pirani suspects, are babies not born in hospitals so the Ugandan Ministry of Health has undertaken a public awareness campaign using posters, brochures and radio spots in various languages. (To listen to the spots in English and Luganda, go to www.med.ubc.ca/media/med_mag/clubfoot.htm.)

“Because of the Ponseti treatment, children born in Uganda with clubfeet now have a good chance to grow up with normally functioning feet, freeing them from a lifetime of pain and suffering,” Pirani says.

Pirani has received a $100,000 gift from an anonymous donor to expand training within Uganda, and to replicate the project in other countries. Governments in Bangladesh, Mali, Nepal and the Indian state of Karnataka, have expressed interest, and he has already taken his message to Brazil and Malawi. The Ponseti International Association estimates that clubfoot occurs in 150,000-200,000 babies each year worldwide.

Dr. Shafique Pirani, far right, has traveled back and forth to Uganda over the past decade in his quest to cure clubfoot.

Clinical Prof. Dr. Shafique Pirani has dedicated himself to improving treatment of clubfoot in Uganda.

By gently manipulating a baby’s foot, placing a cast on it . . . the flexible cartilage is molded into the proper position and stays put as it becomes bone.
When Johnny can count by twos, but can’t tie shoes

BY HILARY THOMSON

They may be labeled clumsy or lazy, but children who struggle to perform simple motor tasks may actually be unable to fully use key regions of the brain, according to research by a UBC graduate student.

Jill Zwicker, a PhD candidate in Rehabilitation Sciences, has conducted one of the first neuroimaging studies exploring motor performance of children with developmental coordination disorder (DCD), a motor learning disability seen in schoolchildren and shared by actor Daniel Radcliffe of Harry Potter fame.

Six per cent of children aged five to 11 have identified DCD.

Zwicker, who began her doctoral studies in January 2006, compared motor performance and brain activation patterns of seven children with DCD. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the students completed a computerized tracing task. Over a two-week period, the eight to 12-year-olds used a joystick like a pen to trace a computer image of a flower in five separate sessions, both in and out of the fMRI scanner. Accuracy and speed were measured each time and fMRI charted brain activity. A control group completed the same tasks.

Although there were few 20 years’ experience and also the mother of a 12-year-old boy with DCD, Her son was diagnosed 18 months ago. “My battle to have him tested and then be given support has been an ongoing struggle since he was six years old,” she says. “You have to be the greatest advocate for your child . . . push to get testing, a diagnosis and the school support these children are entitled to.”

Comments from family and friends suggesting her son is lazy, messy or slow by choice have been frustrating and devastating, she adds.

As a teacher she says the greatest challenge has been not even knowing until recently...
BY HILARY THOMSON

A team of UBC undergraduates will see how their new biosensor technology stacks up against international rivals during UBC’s first-ever participation in the International Genetically Engineered Machines (iGEM) competition, held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) this month. iGEM, launched at MIT in 2003, is widely recognized as the leading undergraduate learning opportunity in synthetic or engineered biology. Projects have ranged from banana- and wintergreen-fragranced bacteria to an arsenic biosensor. This year, more than 100 teams from 20 countries will participate, including 10 teams from Canadian universities.

“We were a glaring exception among Canadian universities because we had never participated in this premier competition,” says Eric Lagally, an assistant professor of chemical and biological engineering who founded the team and is its faculty advisor. “When we announced plans to enter iGEM, it tapped into a lot of latent interest.”

The team was made up of [then] first- to fifth-year students in disciplines that include microbiology and immunology, chemical and biological engineering, and computer science. iGEM organizers give competitors a lot of latitude for ideas that can be inserted into E. coli, a well-studied model organism for operating and designing genetic circuits.

After more than 6,000 hours of research work over the summer, the team has produced the E.coli Traffic Light, a biosensor signaling mechanism operating in E. coli (still being tested at time of publication).

Traffic Light is a whole-cell biosensor – a machine built inside a single living cell – that measures concentrations of substances at finer levels than previously available. Students manipulated DNA and RNA in E. coli cells to detect levels of a sugar added to the medium used to grow the cell. The technique causes the cell to fluoresce green in response to a low level of sugar, amber for a medium level and red for highest levels of sugar. Research problems included triggering the cell to fluoresce at the correct level and getting the non-relevant colours to stop fluorescing so the appropriate one would be clearly visible.

Lagally believes the work has the potential to be broadly significant – the research is entered in the iGEM category of “potentially fundamental advance.” Applications for the technology include detecting heavy metals for environmental analysis or finding the earliest signs of cancer or other disease.

The team was formed with a UBC Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund grant of $36,800. Lagally and co-advisor Joanne Fox, an instructor in the Advanced Molecular Biology Laboratory in the Michael Smith Laboratories, held a first meeting in October 2008 to determine level of interest – 40 students showed up. The ensuing selection process looked at academic performance and diagnostics,” says Ma, who initiated and ran a competitive R&D program.

The UBC iGEM team experience is similar to grad school but with a twist: students had an opportunity to design and manage their project from the ground up, which many grad students don’t get to do.

Team member Amelia Hardjasa doubts there is another venue open to undergraduates that is as encouraging and supportive of self-discovery and organization.

“iGEM has definitely been a better introduction to the research world than anything else I’ve undertaken,” says Hardjasa, a sixth-year student pursuing a double degree in microbiology and classics. “One thing it’s certainly shown me is that research is not easy, but it is incredibly rewarding and I don’t think I’d ever be able to cut it out of my life completely.”

 Fellow team member Eric Ma, a fourth-year integrated sciences student, says the best part of the international competition is the opportunity to exchange ideas with the best and most motivated individuals worldwide.

“Going through this has told me I’m ready for a PhD, hopefully in an applied field relating to cancer treatment and diagnostics,” says Ma, who initiated and ran a UBC project that was matched by a leading international company.

The UBC iGEM project has been supported by Integrated DNA Technologies, an international DNA synthesis company, and by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research through a training program administered by BC Transplant Society.

Students build tiny E.coli ‘traffic light’

New focus for the UBC United Way campaign

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

If United Way organizers have their way, the UBC campus will be rife with pyjamas, bathrobes and slippers on Nov. 13.

That’s the date of the UBC Community United Way campaign’s officially sanctioned PJ Day, which gives all members of the campus community an opportunity to wear their favourite lounging clothes to campus.

The one catch: You have to buy a cute United Way button, available at the UBC Bookstore, Koerner Library and some food service outlets.

The PJ Day is one of many new components of the university’s annual campaign for the United Way, which this year made a number of changes to better reflect the values of the university community.

Gone are the mass mail-outs, the flyers and the paper donation forms. In an effort to curb paper waste, the campaign has launched the online United Way @ Work, which allows employees to donate through a web portal.

“We used almost 45,000 sheets of paper in last year’s campaign,” says campaign chair Lynn Newman, assistant dean, students, in the Faculty of Land and Food Systems.

“This year, we’ve cut it down to about 1,500.”

Staff members who would prefer a paper form can still contact organizers to request one.

The oversized thermometer is also absent, as increasing participation – not achieving a dollar figure – is one of this year’s campaign goals.

Given the campus’s reach, that involvement is essential.

“The United Way is second only to the provincial government as the largest provider of social services in the Lower Mainland, and UBC’s campaign is the largest in the area,” Newman says. “The campus community’s involvement can mean a world of difference to those in need.”

And there are ample ways to participate. Faculty, staff and students can organize an event among friends and colleagues, or join in one of the many bake sales, raffles, and 50/50 draws taking place across campus. Among the top prizes is a one-year campus parking pass.

For the first time, a group of philanthropists will match any new individual donation (as long as it is over $20), or an individual donation that is increased by 15 per cent from the year previously.

All employees who donate will be put into a draw for the grand prize: two tickets to anywhere Air Canada flies in North America (excluding Hawaii).

Watch UBC Events for upcoming events, and visit the campaign website for news, videos and more information: www.ubcunitedway.ubc.ca