Film Alumnus Hands Out Oscars at Academy Awards

Johnny Coffeen, who received an MA in film in 2015, was intimately involved in the recent Academy Awards ceremony, bringing Oscars onto the stage and handing them to the presenters, and escorting award recipients off the stage.

Those he escorted included Jason Bateman, Kate McKinnon, Salma Hayek, Meryl Streep, Ben Affleck, Matt Damon, Leonardo DiCaprio, and many more.

Mr. Coffeen won a Student Academy Award last August for his MUM thesis film and, along with three other student winners, was asked to be a trophy presenter at the 89th Academy Awards.

He was most excited to meet Meryl Streep. “I was pleased how consistently sweet and genuinely humble she was.”

Overall, he says that being at the heart of the event was “beyond surreal.”

“Thankfully the celebrities came in the day before the show to rehearse, so perhaps as a defense mechanism, I had to quickly adapt to the situation by thinking, ‘Oh, you know, no big deal that I’m sitting next to Shirley MacLaine as she talks about her experiences acting in one of my favorite films, The Apartment, while Michael J. Fox and Seth Rogen are across from me cracking jokes about the Back To The Future 2 shoes Seth was wearing.’”

He says, however, that he didn’t get any selfies with the celebrities. “Of all days for my phone to break, it had to be during the Oscars, but thankfully it allowed me to be in the moment.”

Scholarly Journals Continue to Publish Maharishi Effect Studies on Invincible America Assembly

Following the publication a year ago of a study showing reduced homicide and violent crime during the peak years of the Invincible America Assembly from 2006–2010, a new study published last month found a reduction in motor vehicle fatalities. And three additional studies will be coming out soon.

“The level of acceptance is amazing,” said lead author Ken Cavanaugh. “There’s rising receptivity to the notion of a field effect of consciousness and that group meditation can affect the environment.”

The recent study reported that group practice of the Transcendental Meditation® and TM-Sidhi® program by participants in the Invincible America Assembly at MUM reduced the rate of U.S. motor vehicle fatalities by a total of 20.6% over the four-year period 2007–2010.

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All other accidental deaths were reduced by 13.5%. “An estimated 19,435 motor vehicle fatalities and 16,759 other accidental deaths were averted,” said co-author Michael Dillbeck.

From 2007–2010 the group size was above or near 1,725 participants, the size predicted to have a positive influence on the U.S. quality of life. This predicted threshold represents the square root of 1% of the U.S. population.

“Maharishi explains that when a sufficient number of individuals are experiencing pure consciousness during group practice, the field of pure consciousness is enlivened in the entire population,” Dr. Cavanaugh said. “This field effect positively influences the quality of consciousness in the individuals in society in much the same direction as that experienced by those practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique.”

Specifically, this research tested the hypothesis that group practice results in increased alertness and reduced stress in the general population, thus contributing to reduced accident rates.

In their study, published in the Journal of Consciousness Studies, the researchers first calculated a baseline trend for both accidental fatality rates 2002–2006, and then used time series intervention analysis to compare that baseline with the corresponding trend for the intervention period 2007–2010.

For motor vehicle fatality rates, they found that a slightly declining trend during the baseline period 2002–2006 accelerated significantly beginning in January 2007 and continued declining during the intervention period 2007–2010.

In the case of all other accidents, there was a highly significant shift from a rising trend in 2002–2006 to a substantially slower positive trend in 2007–2010.

The probability that the reduced trend for motor vehicle fatalities was due to chance was 3.7 in 10 million and for fatalities due to other accidents, less than 8.4 in 1 million.

The prediction of reduced accidental fatalities was lodged in advance. The researchers were able to rule out alternative explanations.

Study Shows Brain Coherence When Listening to Vedic Pandits

Those who have listened to live Vedic recitation by pandits often have experiences of deep inner silence, and now a new EEG study describes the coherent brain wave patterns associated with those experiences.

EEG measurements on the 37 subjects while they listened to the recitation not only found coherence in their brain wave patterns, but that the coherence was actually higher than during their practice of the Transcendental Meditation technique.

However, study author Fred Travis explains that all of the subjects had not only been practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique for an average of 34 years but had also practiced the TM-Sidhi program an average of 28 years. When he measured four subjects who practiced only Transcendental Meditation, they didn’t have the same high level of brain wave coherence.

“Those who practice the TM-Sidhi program have cultivated the habit of sitting in silence and allowing the mental activity to easily pass through awareness,” Dr. Travis said. “This provided the basis, I think, for them to profit maximally from listening to Vedic recitation.”

Dr. Travis analyzed the subjective reports of the participants’ experience during listening to the recitation and found that their experiences were generally 1) deeper than during Transcendental Meditation practice; 2) experienced as an inner process; and 3) characterized by lively silence. They reported that they “experienced a depth of experience rarely experienced even during deep Transcendental Meditation practice.”

EEG measurements showed higher alpha1 coherence, which is associated with the experience of pure consciousness. And they showed higher theta2 coherence, which is associated with attending to internal mental processes. The latter finding explains the participants’ experience that the Vedic recitations felt as though they weren't external sounds but rather internal vibrations.

Those who only practiced Transcendental Meditation had higher gamma coherence, with gamma being associated with focusing on an external object. Hence, their experience of the recitation as an outer experience.

The study was published last month in Consciousness and Cognition. Coauthors of the study were Niyazi Parim and Amrita Shrivastava.

FROM THE FOUNDER

“T is now time that, together with the outer nature of the different branches of learning, education in the inner spheres of life should be provided for students. Without knowledge of the Absolute and without the practice of Transcendental Meditation to unfold mental faculties, education remains incomplete.”

— Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Science of Being

Contributing Writer: Livia Cole
Natural language computing will help many more people to enjoy the benefits of the internet and information age in a much more effective and efficient way," Dr. Khan said. "This will enable many more people around the world, especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries, to effectively bridge the digital and language divides in a practical way, and help sustainable global development.”

Dr. Khan said there’s a lot of excitement among his students in the Computer Professionals Program as they work on state-of-the-art solutions and try to relate them to problems in industry.

The work of MUM students assessing storm water management along Crow Creek in order to provide data for the city and make recommendations for solutions was recently highlighted in the Journal of Sustainability Education.

Written by MUM instructor Dina El Chammas-Gass, the article shows educators how project-based learning can not only help students learn, but also can be of practical benefit to the community.

Sustainable living students began work on the project as part of a course on sustainable watershed management in February, 2014.

They addressed a serious situation that has frequently occurred locally: storms that lead to raw sewage being discharged into Crow Creek.

As Ms. El Chammas-Gass explains in her article, changing rainfall patterns, land use, and the quality of the soil and vegetation in Iowa has led to an increase in flash floods. This overloads the stormwater/wastewater system, resulting in leaking pipelines, water flooding out manholes, and raw sewage then bypassing the wastewater treatment plant and going directly into the creek.

As a result of the speed and volume of the contaminated water, the creek banks are eroded, and the creek is inundated with sediment and bacteria.

Ms. El Chammas-Gass, who has 16 years of experience as an environmental engineer in the water resource management field, involved the students with local organizations working to address the problem. The students were then invited to do the assessment to be included in a report.

The students used a GPS unit and a standard assessment procedure that entailed entering information about the conditions of the creek, such as water clarity, flow, channel pattern, sediment deposits, and bank erosion.

They then analyzed the data they collected and came to some conclusions. They realized that systems such as downspouts and storm drains were the culprits.

They then conducted a survey of Fairfield locations and rated each according to how it was contributing to the problem. They then made recommendations.

Their work was cited in the final report of the Watershed Development and Planning Assistance Cooperative Agreement for the Crow Creek Water Quality Project.

The project spanned several courses. In addition, the students formed a water club and did additional work during their free time.

“The work the students did will continue to serve as a long-range watershed plan,” said Fairfield Mayor Ed Malloy.

Subsequent classes have now been focusing on the MUM water basin and making recommendations for steps the University can take to minimize runoff.

The next project for the students will be to begin implementing some recommendations they have made for campus, to maintain the systems that are installed, and to evaluate the performance.

Ms. El Chammas-Gass concluded her article by saying how the students benefited both from this style of learning and from taking on such a worthy project.

“Students learn valuable technical and life skills, and move on to be protectors and ambassadors driven by a deep sense of conviction. Sustainability becomes a way of life, not an intellectual concept, and becomes the means of deeply uniting self and place.”

Ms. El Chammas-Gass’s article can be accessed on the web at tinyurl.com/zyh2jka.
New Course by Dr. Nader To Be Offered

An eight-lesson course on using mathematics to understand the nature of consciousness and featuring recorded lessons by Tony Nader, MD, PhD, will begin Tuesday, March 28, as a continuing education course that is available both on campus and online.

The course consists of the first eight lessons of a 17-lesson course in which Dr. Nader unfolds the details of his 65-page paper “Consciousness Is All There Is: A Mathematical Approach with Applications,” which was published in the *Journal of Mathematics and Consciousness*.

Dr. Nader postulates that consciousness is all that there is and places this postulate in a mathematical framework, introducing fundamental axioms that are motivated by the experience and dynamics of consciousness. His approach provides a framework for showing how the universe emerges from consciousness.

Each lesson includes a 45-minute video by Dr. Nader followed by discussion led by Professor Cathy Gorini.

Optional classes on Saturdays, April 1, 8, and 15, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., will give participants an opportunity to do activities Dr. Nader developed for this course.

The course will begin on Tuesday, March 28, 7:45–9:15 p.m. in Dalby Hall and will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays for four weeks. The first class is free.

The cost is $95 and $65 students, staff, and faculty on the IA grant program. See http://mathematics-and-consciousness.eventbrite.com.

For those who can’t attend in person, or who want to view the lessons again at home, the videos by Dr. Nader will be available online. The discussions and Saturday sessions will be recorded and then uploaded immediately after each class.

No previous courses in mathematics are required. The only prerequisite is instruction in the Transcendental Meditation technique.

Free Workshops on Tree Pruning, Gardening for Kids

Green Iowa AmeriCorps and the Iowa State Extension Office will offer a free presentation and workshop on fruit tree pruning on Monday, March 20, 4–5:30 pm at the Extension Office (2606 W. Burlington) and on Tuesday, March 21, 4–5:30 pm at Fairfield’s public orchard.

For the March 21st event please park at the Parkview Care Center (2237 Hwy 34) and walk down the bike path hill to the public orchard.

In addition, on Thursday, March 30, 9 am–3:30 pm, the Jefferson County Iowa State Extension Office and Green Iowa are partnering to offer 4th through 12th graders a day of learning and fun.

Activities include Jeopardy, observation activities, and seed starting. Lunch and snacks will be provided. This is a free event, but please register by contacting the extension office at 472-4166 by March 15. For information, email GreenIowaMUM@gmail.com.