GETTING TO LBNL

You’ve been asked so many times about your project, but we want to see agriculture and science, such as your class here at Berkeley. What’s your experience teaching that class after becoming a Nobel winner?

If anything, there are lots of things that are really great about getting back connected to the University of California, and that’s a fairy tale stuff, you know, of the Nobel Prize. When you’re teaching, it’s good at reminding you what’s important and what things you care about. And this course [Physics and Music] I really care about a lot because it’s one of those few chances that you have at discussing ways to approach the world for people who not necessarily ever get a chance to do a science major or study science as a career but basically the ideas and ways we approach the world as scientists are everybody should be using and should have as part of their bag of tricks. It’s not only the way to approach the world but everybody should have that as one of their ways to go at it. Music of course is one of my loves and pleasures throughout my life.

In this particular case I think it’s a nice easy way to bring people to science at a university where they wouldn’t necessarily be drawn to or feel at home in and yet they are drawn to and feel at home with music. And then of course it’s just fun when you’re learning about music using science knowledge about the little surprises and things that you never knew.

What is your reaction when you found out about the prize?

When they called about the prize, I felt that my dad and I were both very happy and excited. What really surprised me was the fact that everybody who was part of the work felt like they were part of the prize and enjoy it too. It was like organizing a wedding.

Do you have any hobbies?

Well, having a child is of course, is a bit of a hobby. Having an 8-year-old child around who is constantly inventing new things to do that you never thought you’d be interested in. That’s always been fun. Of course, I still play tennis, and listening to music and experimenting with that. I always used to get my friends together at my house every other week and we would sight read choral music, anything from the 16th century up to the 20th century, we all particularly liked jazz. But of course things change, people move out of town, we lost our tenor, and you know that when you lose your tenor that you’re in trouble.

Is your 8-year-old daughter interested in science too?

She is! In fact, she was saying to me until a year ago or so, she plans to be a scientist, opera singer, babysitter. She had like four or five things that she decided was going to be her career, and recently, she told me that she was going to have to drop science, and I was so happy and surprised because she really loved science, but she said that she worked much too hard, and that it wouldn’t fit in with the other things that she wanted to do. I had to convince her that it was not just hard work, but that its fun and rewarding as well.

How do you like your parking spot?

Whom do you park next to?

I can’t imagine that in the United States, because we don’t have that focus on science. But the fact that we have managed to get a sitcom about the Big Bang and that it does reference topical science occasionally, it’s a little bit in that vein. It reminds people that there’s something going on and that’s all that really matters. And of course, it’s always cool to receive calls from friends from all over the world saying, “Hey, we saw you get referenced in The Big Bang Theory!”. Unfortunately, I’ve never actually seen episodes where I am referenced.

Have you ever Googled yourself?

I’ve checked to see what’s coming up, but usually it’s Wikipedia, an article that is on the Berkeley campus webpage, and other standard things. I don’t think I’ve ever seen any YouTube links to The Big Bang episodes though! You know, at one point a year or two back, I remember that the Wikipedia article had mistakes in it, but I imagine it’s all different now because some people must update it.
Ambience is the first and only student group dedicated to creating a community for glovers at universities. Established in the summer of 2011 at UC Berkeley and UC Irvine, Ambience promotes glove lightshows as an art, dance, and form of entertainment in a positive environment. Its members engage in weekly sessions and perform at dances and philanthropy events.

The organization's mission is to create a safe and sober environment for people to learn, practice, and trade lightshows. However, Ambience is not simply a campus club, but a movement for all lightshow artists who love what they do and want to see it become accepted as a respected art form. Its goal is not to make gloving mainstream, but rather spread awareness and give people the opportunity to become more exposed to the culture. Many common misconceptions about gloving exist that make the art appear to be intrinsically tied to drug and rave culture. Ambience wants to break those stereotypes and build a forum for the appreciation of lightshows beyond these realms of influence.

Ambience is being brought to multiple campuses in order to establish a community for glovers and demonstrate to the public the true value of the art. Ambience works in conjunction with the DeCal on campus known as “Ambience: An Intro to Glove Lightshows.” The DeCal provides students on campus the opportunity to become familiarized with lightshow theory and musicality while simultaneously learning fundamental techniques involved in lightshow performances. An important project that students must perform is a double lightshow, in which two students perform an improvised lightshow together with nothing more than a few key aspects in mind and knowledge of each other’s style. During Fall 2011, the two facilitators decided to record a double lightshow as an example for the class to learn from. Pleased with how the performance turned out, the facilitators decided to submit the video in the Google+ and UC Berkeley Talent Show. The talent show was an online competition that displayed a wide variety of talent at UC Berkeley. The winner was determined by the video that received the most +1's by the end of the competition. Multiple performance groups and talented students entered; however, people seemed to be most impressed by the double lightshow performance. Ambience was awarded first place and a prize of $200, helping push glove lightshows forward as a legitimate talent and art!
Julio Diaz was an ordinary Joe who took the New York City Subway every day. One night as he stepped out of the subway, a teenager greeted him with a knife, demanding all his money. Julio gave the teenager his wallet, and as the robber began to run off, Julio stopped him. “Hey kid, it is a bit cold. Do you want my jacket, too?” The baffled teenager accepted the offer, and Julio said, “I’m on my way to dinner right now. You’re welcome to join me if you like.” The teenager was dumbstruck. At the end of their dinner, Julio said to the kid, “I would really like to treat you, but you have my wallet.” Very naturally, the teenager returned the wallet to Julio. “May I ask for one more thing?” asked Julio. “May I have your knife?” The teenager gave Julio his knife.

This is the story Nipun Mehta gave to close his presentation at TEDxBerkeley. Mr. Mehta is the founder of ServiceSpace, a non-profit organization that coined the term giftivism—“the practice of radically generous acts that change the world.”

Mr. Mehta was one of the fifteen speakers and performers at TEDxBerkeley. TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design), since its founding in 1984 as a local conference in Monterey, CA, has become a global event. On February 4, 2012, TED came to Berkeley for the third consecutive year, bringing with it some of the world’s most innovative visionaries.

Among these visionaries was a marketing manager of Google, an IBM sales representative turned Broadway singer, a UC Berkeley professor and researcher on human-computer interaction, and a classically trained hip-hop violinist. Each of the speakers/performers were given 18 minutes to present his or her idea in a creative way to inspire the audience.

Sitting in Zellerbach listening and watching these presenters on stage was one of-a-kind experience. It was not a typical “performance.” It was a TEDx experience. It was not a typical “performance” one would associate with Zellerbach Hall. Although the majority of the time there was a speaker with a clicker in hand, flipping through PowerPoint slides, it was surprisingly entertaining to listen to people who were serious about their crazy ideas. A friend of mine, however, was not convinced. “PowerPoint? That sounds like going to class to me,” he said. Well, he was right. It did feel like lecture, except that the lecturers were people from Google, Broadway, America’s Got Talent, and, of course, UC Berkeley.

Overall, going to TEDxBerkeley was like going to a live concert. I had listened to many TED Talks online, but to hear the squeaking of the stage as the speaker gathered his thoughts amidst a silent auditorium and then laugh with the rest of the audience was truly a memorable experience.

GOT TALENT? Lindsey Stirling, who has been playing the violin for 19 years with a range that extends from classical to rock and roll, takes part in a show-stopping performance at TEDxBerkeley 2012. The America’s Got Talent contestant played the musical accompaniment to Capacitor’s Okeanos.

1 FLUIDIC FREEDOM: Jodi Lomask’s Capacitor performs Okeanos, a multidisciplinary portrait of the ocean as body, environment, texture, metaphor, and force. 2 FORCE OF NATURE: An string quartet performs during a TED Talk called Art made of storms by Nathalie Miebach, who turns weather data into sculptures that then become inspiration for music.

3 HE PUTS THE EECS IN GEEKS: Broadway star Charles Holt performs at the end of the first session, named Connect. During the TED Talk, he turns weather data into sculptures that then become inspiration for music. 4 LEADING OFF: The other two sessions were dubbed Inspire. An string quartet performs during a TED Talk called Art made of storms by Nathalie Miebach, who turns weather data into sculptures that then become inspiration for music.
From Robert Reich’s speech on the November 15 “Day of Action” to the arrival of Daniel Ellsberg on November 21, the Occupy movement swept Berkeley by force in an interval of less than a week. Throughout this time, students were kept informed through the #occupycal tag on Twitter.

The following are three real “tweets,” each complemented by a first-person account of the event.

Robert Reich to speak on Sproul steps tomorrow after 8pm.

1:27 PM - 14 Nov 11 via Twitter for Android

Nov. 15: The buzzing of the students gradually grew louder as they poured out of Evans, having just finished a very difficult Chemistry 1A midterm exam. As I glanced around, it seemed as if half the freshmen class had emerged from different testing locations all over campus all at once, their voices ringing in the air with relief. As the crowd rapidly dissipated, I allowed myself to be swept up in the mob with my friend Laura; we had agreed to go on a ‘lights date’ together so that we could admire the vibrant blue and yellow lights that wrapped around Sather Gate, in honor of the Big Game that was happening later on in the week. We chattered happily (after all, the Game was happening later on in the week). We chattered happily (after all, the Game was happening later on in the week).

Nov. 16: Rare is the time when something on Twitter catches my attention. While scrolling down the tweets from the Occupy Cal movement, a name caught my eye: Daniel Ellsberg. Not many people have heard his name; I first heard of Mr. Ellsberg while slaving over a history project in high school concerning the Vietnam War. He was a notable figure in those times, not only because he was a United States military analyst, but because he was the one to release the “Pentagon Papers,” which detailed the reality of the negative impacts of the Vietnam War on the U.S.

Imagine my pleasant surprise realizing that such a notable figure in our history had set foot on our campus. Cal is known to be proud protestors on injustice, including the Vietnam War. It amazed me how history, in a way, comes full circle.

Daniel Ellsberg was notable in its protest against the War and one of the important figures finally came to our campus to support the injustice done in our campus. The atmosphere of gaining such an important figure for the rights of students on campus is truly inspiring.

In an interview he gave on Sproul, he revealed that tonight had given him the confidence that, as a group, we can make one campus at a time.

Daniel Ellsberg is at the #occupycal encampment with us! #pentagonpapers

4:18 PM - 16 Nov 11 via Twitter for iPad

Nov. 16: As I was making my way to class through the throngs of students walking through Sproul and the Occupy Cal assembly, I was suddenly handed a flyer for a mass pajama party on the steps of Sproul. I was shocked at the event and, quite frankly, was skeptical of how many people would show up simply because it was a couple of days before Thanksgiving. I, myself, was heading back to SoCal that very night for break. At the airport that night, I was waiting for my flight. I started browsing Facebook to see whether there were any status updates about the event. I was surprised to see that friends and acquaintances of mine were actually attending the mass sleepout. I later found out that, unlike what I previously thought, many people showed up for this event; it was one of the largest crowd-dense nights in the Occupy movement as so many had been expected to be. By balancing the regular responsibilities of a student along with fighting for our education, we are demonstrating our dedication to this large-scale political movement.

The sheer number of people who attended the mass sleepout and braved the weather and the possibility of arrest was a sign of our strong solidarity and hopes for change.