



A rhymin' good time



English instructor Robert Mitchell addresses the crowd before the start of an afternoon of poetry and prose last Thursday afternoon. Students and teachers alike gathered in the library in celebration of National Poetry Month. Photo by Ross Tsvetanov

Gospel Choir to sing this Saturday

By DANELLE MEYER
Staff writer

Smith Center presents the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir who will be performing a show at Ohlone College Saturday, May 6 at 8 p.m.

Twenty years in the making, the choir now includes 55 vocalists who perform gospel music.

What makes the choir unique--besides being filled with multiple races and religious backgrounds--is that all of the performers are unified in their love for music.

The performance is expected to bring the audience a great night of music directed by award-winning Choir Director Terrance Kelly. "Even if people are familiar with a type of gospel, they will hear a new twist with Kelly's arrangements," said Bea Andrade, program manager for the choir. "Oakland Interfaith always puts on a rousing and spiritual performance. It's all about praise and feeling the Spirit and having a good time."

Besides getting people on their feet, the choir also has other mes-

sages to impart to their audience. "We're a multi-racial group and it's about people being able to come together and transcend differences and sing praise to a spirit no matter how you name it," explained Andrade.

The choir practices weekly to perform their 30-40 shows a year. Their demanding conductor makes sure their shows are pristine.

"Terrance has a very musical background and is a great musician so he demands a high standard of musicianship," said Andrade.

Their mission statement, according to the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir's website, "is to employ black gospel music to express the power of spirit and bring a message of faith, hope, love and joy...[and] the principles of equality, justice, peace, unity and cooperation and to serve as a model for what is possible among all people."

Tickets are \$25 adults, \$15 for students and seniors and \$10 for children under 12 and can be purchased at the Smith Center box office at 510-659-6031 or online at www.smithcenterpresents.com

Jazz guitarist lives up to expectations

By JEROME ENGELBERTS
Editor-in-chief
and ROB LASH
Correspondent

Last Friday jazz guitarist Grant Geissman and band took the stage at the Jackson Theater in the Smith Center to perform what turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable night of jazz. Geissman, a veteran player and recording sideman, played many selections off his new CD "Say That!," backed up by a tight and well-rehearsed band. Well rehearsed they should be--they're the same guys on the CD, excepting the drummer, Dave Tull.

A small aside here for the Jackson Theater before we delve into the music. I had never been here before and I must say the Theater is ideal for this kind of performance. There isn't a bad seat in the house. The setting makes you think that you're in a much smaller room than you really are (which is nice, since it provides a sense of intimacy well suited for small jazz combos) and the sound was excellent, not turned up to "deafening" as sound engineers in too many venues these days are guilty of doing.

Geissman started off with the title track of the CD, "Say That!" which set the tone for much of the material

that was to follow. Coaxing mellow, Wes Montgomery-like octaves out of his blonde Gibson ES-335, he showed the capacity crowd early on that he wasn't hampered by lack of facility on the instrument. What also set the tone early was the first-rate musicianship of the band. Special kudos are due to pianist Emilio Palame, who comped with restraint (always a good thing), and soloed in a sparse and angular style that at times reminded me of Red Garland, but also Bob James. And as long as credits are awarded--drummer Dave Tull was all over everything, stirring the pot, grooving like a you-know-what and doing very interesting

textural things with the cymbals on top of everything else. Bassist Trey Henry whipped out a tuba for authenticity in "Grandpa's Banjo," a 1920's-tinged composition dedicated to Geissman's grandfather's banjo playing, which also featured Brian Scanlon playing clarinet.

Other offerings included "What's The Story," featuring a fine tenor sax solo by Scanlon and "Theme Two And A Half Men" (co-written by Geissman for the TV sitcom)--jazzed up from its original 22 second TV version and featuring what struck me as some interesting Vince Guaraldi-like twist in the bridge. Throughout the concert,

Geissman played solos that were creative, soulful and in general made me realize I needed to practice more. Also, and this is a rare occurrence, his solos are concise. No long rambling self-indulgence here but to-the-point melodic material that make the point and then wrap up--much in the manner of an accomplished raconteur.

There was, like on the CD, much to like here, and I think the audience agreed with that assessment. If you missed the event, but would like to fix that: Grant Geissman will be performing in the Bay Area next at Yoshi's on June 7 (visit www.yoshis.com for details).

TV director Gary Kauf makes family pilgrimage to Shanghai

By FRANKIE ADDIEGO
Staff writer

A group of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their families recently traveled on a pilgrimage to Shanghai, China to visit Hongkew, a village where many Jewish refugees fled to during the Holocaust. Among the people who returned to visit the historic district was Ohlone Director of Television Operations Gary Kauf.

"It was really dramatic," said Kauf, "It's powerful stuff to go back into your parents' history."

Unable to attain visas to the United States, Kauf's parents became refugees during the Holocaust. "It was very hard to go to another country unless you had a relative who was willing to [supervise] you," remarked Kauf. As a result, some 21,000 Jews from Germany, Austria and Poland traveled to Shanghai as refugees.

According to Kauf, after the Japanese took over China in 1943, Jewish refugees were forced to live

in the tiny section of Shanghai that was known as Hongkew. A small Jewish community still remains in Shanghai.

"My dad used to tell me stories about how he couldn't afford shoes...so he put cardboard in the shoes [to fill in for the soles] and it seemed to work, except for the rainy months," said Kauf.

Kauf was one of about 100 people who attended the pilgrimage, known as the Rickshaw Reunion.

"The part of it that got to me," said Kauf, "[is] this little hovel that my father lived in with one room [and] no running water...you don't think of your parents living in poverty."

According to Kauf, the American-Jewish Committee eventually aided people in getting away from Hongkew. After that, his parents moved to San Francisco.

When asked if this was an annual event, Kauf said, "The last time they did this was in 1985."

Kauf also added that there would be no more trips. "There aren't

many of these guys [Holocaust survivors] left. This is the last chance to do this because Shanghai is rebuilding itself from the ground up."

Kauf also alluded to the relationship that Ohlone is building with China. The college is planning to send a student delegation to Ohlone's sister colleges in Taizhou, Hangzhou and Shanghai this summer. In addition, Kauf revealed an agreement to send Ohlone instructors to teach 6 courses at the Shanghai College of Arts & Crafts next spring.

While he was there, a Chinese television crew was filming a documentary about the Hongkew experience. The makers of the piece asked if they could interview him and then they asked if they could interview his son, who is 17 years old.

"What is clear is that my son will carry this with him," said Kauf. "My children, who are second generation citizens, will also carry these stories with them."

Asian American identity

By JOYCE LEUNG
Features editor

As a young immigrant from the Philippines, Asian Pacific American Student Association President (APASA) Brian Morris's accent quickly attracted many "friends" in his 3rd grade class. His new classmates, however, offered their friendship not out of goodwill, but in exchange for money. "They wanted me to pay them for acceptance," lamented Morris.

More than a decade later, his accent is nearly gone, but to Morris's dismay, his near-perfect English is now eliciting prejudice from his own race. Filipinos who tout their ethnic pride on their sleeve now think Morris is not "culturally aware."

"Because of my fluency in English...they think I'm white washed," said Morris. "I'm experiencing the reverse of it." Morris can't seem to win either way, but he is not alone. His frustration with cultural identity and assimilation echo those of many second generation Asian Americans who openly discussed their ideas on Asian American identity in a forum last Thursday afternoon hosted by APASA.

Encouraged to blend in, but also criticized when they became too "American," the consensus was that Asian American children couldn't seem to please society or their parents. Several students related stories in which previous generations would comment on their "Americanization" or express disappointment when they couldn't speak their native language. The audience seemed to share a mix of anger and regret because the remarks, though hurtful, pointed to a cultural awareness they wished they had.

"When people ask me about my family history and what dialect I speak...I have no freakin' idea," said Jason Chan, who felt that there was a divide between him and his Chinese culture.

The perils of Paxil: it's not easy being clean



State of Illusion

By CHRIS MARSHALL

Paxil--generic, Paroxetine--and I go way back. My insane relationship with this drug started more than 10 years ago, when I was first prescribed it to help combat my panic attacks in junior high. On one hand I loved the drug because it provided me with the extra help I needed to get through my turbulent teenage years, yet on the other hand I have been plagued by Paxil's side effects, politics and price.

I must stress how personal Paxil is to me. It has been a part of my life for a decade--almost half of my life. I don't pretend to know all the facts surrounding Paxil, but I don't believe anyone knows all the facts, which is part of the problem. My own doctor told me researchers at various universities have admitted they have no idea how Paxil, and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor drugs in general, affect the human brain. One of my friends put it best: depression and anxiety require a precision strike somewhere in the brain, but being unable to do that, SSRI drugs are used to "carpet bomb" the brain. Since I don't have all the facts surrounding Paxil, what I am left with are my experiences, and these are what I wish to convey.

Let me emphasize a few things before I begin. I am by no means recommending anyone stop taking any drug they are on. In no way do I recommend anyone suddenly start taking medication. Any decision about any medication should rest solely between you and your doctor. I simply wish to tell my story.

The most recent bad experience I had with Paxil is withdrawal symptoms. Beginning in February, I began to show symptoms of high blood pressure and an increased heart rate. This coincided directly with a switch in the manufacturer of my Paxil. This being the cause is up for debate: my doctor said this is next to impossible, while my mother's neurologist said there are

many generic drugs known to not work the same as their brand-name counterparts. My doctor looked up Paxil in his Big Red Book o' Drugs and right there, in heavy bold-faced type under possible cardiovascular changes, were my symptoms of increased blood pressure and heart rate. Needless to say, both my doctor and I were worried enough to take me off Paxil.

Discontinuing Paxil is not a single-step affair, but rather a weaning process. One must taper Paxil slowly because it has a very short half-life in the body -- approximately six days and Paxil is all but gone from the body. Before beginning the process, I laid out a plan: beginning at my normal dose of 30 mg a day, I would taper in quantities of 10 until I hit the 10 mg mark, where I would then go down to five, and eventually nothing. I did not set the period of time between dose reductions because I had no idea how I would react. I am very glad I did not set time goals.

I knew this process would be difficult; I had read stories on the Internet about peoples' battles with hellish withdrawal symptoms, but I figured these stories to be embellished and expected a difficult, yet not overwhelmingly terrible time. Oh how wrong I was.

A lot of doctors don't believe in Paxil withdrawal symptoms or they have never heard of them. I'm not sure what I felt can even be classified as withdrawal symptoms, seeing as I had no actual craving for Paxil and many say cravings are a requisite for withdrawal. But I am sure of one thing: during the process of discontinuing Paxil I was very sick, to the point of being incapacitated.

The first symptom to manifest itself occurred about 24 hours after I took 20 mg for the first time in the form of a headache accompanied by a slight grogginess.

I would describe it as the type of grogginess one feels after being awake for 24 hours without a wink of sleep. This turned into a constant headache very much like a migraine, except this one lasted about six weeks.

A few days into my first dose reduction--going from my normal

30 mg a day to 20 mg - I began to feel very dizzy. This dizziness persisted for weeks, and transformed into nausea. I was able to curb this nausea with some crystallized ginger, but suffice to say it was very unpleasant.

During the first week and a half I was still able to function somewhat. I had a hard time focusing on things though--sometimes literally. My eyes would refuse to focus; every time I would shift my eyes to another object, my eyes would take a few seconds to refocus, something my eyes never did before.

The second week and a half, where I reduced my dose down to 10 mg a day, were the worst. I began to feel what I can only describe as "whooshes" or "pulses." My head felt like it was on a boat crashing through rough seas--a very real-feeling rolling sensation that was somehow internalized inside my skull.

For these 10 days, I was pretty much reduced to a quivering blob. All I could really do was lay in my bed, in a fetal position, and wait for the pain to stop. During this time--and the next week or so--the whooshes in my head became audible. I could hear what sounded like bursts of wind accompany the rolling sensation. This was one of the most frightening things I have

ever experienced; I thought I was going crazy.

During the last 10 days, when I was taking only 5 mg of Paxil per day, I began to recover. My symptoms were reduced to what they were near the beginning--just a headache and a little lightheadedness. All of my symptoms disappeared about eight weeks after I first reduced my dosage.

I sit here now, writing this, feeling pretty much the best I have felt in 10 years. Some of the things for which I originally took Paxil have returned, though to a lesser degree. I periodically feel anxious, and some of my obsessive-compulsive behavior has returned. On the plus side however, my pulse and heart rate are back to normal and the other side effects of Paxil are gone. These include sexual side effects from which I no longer suffer. I won't go into detail about all of them, but one was a complete lack of a sex drive.

Dealing with this side effect for 10 years, I pretty much missed out on the whole discovering-your-sexuality thing most teenagers do. While this let me focus on school, I do feel as if I missed out on an important part of my adult development.

I'm not advocating people stop taking Paxil. Anyone even slightly interested in getting off any drug needs to talk to his or her doctor--I

cannot stress this enough. I do not hate Paxil; I hate GlaxoSmithKline, the company that produces Paxil, and every other giant pharmaceutical company. They run an amoral business, where profit supercedes the health of people. My doctor informed me there is now a "black-box" warning doctors receive about Paxil, warning of increased chances of suicide in young people who take Paxil. He said this warning is at the beginning of the documentation sent to doctors about Paxil and is very prominent. GlaxoSmithKline, however, does not make this information available to the consumer.

For more information about Paxil and the experiences of others who have taken it, I suggest visiting <http://www.quitpaxil.org> and <http://www.paxilprogress.org> on the web. These two sites are full of information about Paxil side effects and possible withdrawal symptoms, and are a good read for anyone taking Paxil or any other SSRI drug.

Paxil helped me a lot when I was younger, but I disagree completely with the politics surrounding the drug, and the practices of the giant pharmaceutical companies. If anyone is interested in getting off any drug like Paxil, talk to your doctor, don't do it out of the blue. I simply told my story to prove that though difficult, it is quite possible.

Craft sale in Quad



Deepti Agrawal holds up an intricately patterned vase during Wednesday's crafts sale in the Quad. Photo by Chirag Patel

May 9, 2006

Financial Aid Awareness Day

11:00am-1:00pm
At The Quad

There's Still Time To Apply!!!!

Learn about applying for Financial Aid!

(Especially if you have never applied)

Receive information on scholarships!

For Ohlone College Students & Applicants

Free Food and Music!

For more information please contact the Financial Aid Department at (510) 659-6150

*Sponsored by the Ohlone College Financial Aid Department
Building 1, Room 1124*