



# PALO ALTO/PENINSULA CHAPTER AGO

## NEWSLETTER—SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

### FROM THE DEAN

Greetings, Palo/Alto Peninsula Chapter!

I hope you are refreshed and enthused from summer vacations and festivities. Thank you to all who substituted and make it possible for others to get away. Our summer will end with a Labor Day Weekend Barbeque on Sunday September 6th from 1 to 5 p.m. at Christ Church, Portola Valley. Bring your friends and family. This will be a very informal event, with a short meeting around 2 p.m. Otherwise, we will be chatting, eating, or hiking on the glorious grounds of Christ Church. You are welcome to bring food, though we will have enough food there, a quasi-potluck.

The day after, if you are so inclined, you may attend the recital of my student, Mike Morgenstern. He is playing the accordion and the organ, but not at the same time. Mike brings much joy to people's lives, but he also shares with me lots of pertinent information. Apart from sharing his experiences at Burning Man with me, as he did this morning, he also loaned me a book called *The Talent Code*, by Daniel Coyle.

*The Talent Code* suggests that fine performance in any endeavor is not due to genes or I.Q., but to practicing, in particular, slow-practicing, and doing tons of it. It gives several examples of people finding the optimal way to learn and to practice. Coyle's three rules are 1) absorb the whole thing 2) break it into chunks and 3) practice those chunks slowly until they are deeply engrained. It should feel very clumsy for a while, but that's your brain at work, like a new baby learning to walk.

One of the musical examples in this book is at Meadowmount, a music camp in upstate New York. Chunking and slowing things down is taken so seriously that it is hard to recognize much coming from the practice rooms. By slowing down the rate of notes being played at practice, and increasing the attention to errors, students actually learn new music in half the time and with greater accuracy. The camp's director spends three hours teaching a single page, but when it's over, the students can just about perform it on stage.

The scientific explanation of why this works is based on myelin, the microscopic insulation of our nerve fibers. The more myelin, the easier it is for electric signals to travel through the chains of neurons wired throughout our bodies. How do we get more layers of myelin around our nerve cells? Simply, by practicing. It works at any age, and at any level.

There are ways to practice that are better than others, and I'm sure you, too, have read good books on this, but here's what Coyle has to say (p.34-35).

Q: Why is targeted, mistake-focused practice so effective?

A: Because the best way to build a good circuit is to fire it, attend to mistakes, then fire it again, over and over. Struggle is not an option: it's a biological requirement.

Q: Why are passion and persistence key ingredients of talent?

A: Because wrapping myelin around a big circuit requires immense energy and time. If you don't love it, you'll never work hard enough to be great.

Q: What's the best way to get to Carnegie Hall?

A: Go straight down Myelin Street.

Yours,

**RANI FISCHER**

### ELECTRONIC ORGAN FOR SALE

John Clark is offering for sale a small upright organ, CONN brand. W 46 ½" x H 34 ½" x D 20 ¼". Contact him at (650) 269-9251 or by email at <jhamiltonclark@gmail.com>.

## POSITION AVAILABLE

**Bethany Presbyterian Church, San Bruno** seeks a Director of Music. Bethany is a small congregation (average attendance about 50) with solid musicians, both vocal and instrumental. For more information, call the church at (650) 589-3711.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6

1:00 p.m. CHAPTER OPENING EVENT. Christ Church, 815 Portola Rd., Portola Valley. [See *From the Dean* for details]

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 6

3:30 p.m. John Karl Hirten. Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, 1111 Gough St., San Francisco. [Hereafter *CSSM*]

### MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7

3:00 p.m. Mike Morgenstern (accordion & organ). St. Bede's, 2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13

3:30 p.m. Angela Kraft Cross. *CSSM*

### THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17

8:00 p.m. Trinity College Choir, Cambridge, UK. Stanford Memorial Church.

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18

7:30 p.m. Trinity College Choir, Cambridge, UK. Grace Cathedral, San Francisco.

### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19

10:00 a.m. Chelsea Chen Workshop. Campbell United Methodist, 1675 Winchester Blvd., Campbell.

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20

3:00 p.m. Chelsea Chen Recital. Los Altos United Methodist, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos Hills.



### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 20

7:00 p.m. Trinity College Choir, Cambridge, UK. St. Paul's Episcopal, 114 Montecito Ave., Oakland.

### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 25

8:00 p.m. Robert Morgan (J. S. Bach series). Stanford Memorial Church.

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27

3:30 p.m. David Hatt. *CSSM*

### SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 27

4:00 p.m. Rani Fischer. St. Bede's, 2650 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park.

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 4

4:00 p.m. Archdiocesan Choir Festival. *CSSM*

### WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 14

8:00 p.m. Robert Morgan (J. S. Bach series). Stanford Memorial Church.

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 18

3:30 p.m. Bede Parry. *CSSM*

### SATURDAY OCTOBER 24

8:00 p.m. Master Sinfonia with T. Paul Rosas. Valley Presbyterian, 945 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 25

3:00 p.m. Master Sinfonia with T. Paul Rosas. Los Altos United Methodist, 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos Hills.

### SUNDAY OCTOBER 25

3:30 p.m. Anthony Hammond. *CSSM*

### FRIDAY OCTOBER 30

8:00 p.m. Robert Morgan (J. S. Bach series). Stanford Memorial Church.

### CONCERTS IN SYMPHONY HALL:

#### SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 2010

6:00 p.m. Paul Jacobs. *Davies Symphony Hall*

#### SUNDAY MARCH 28, 2010

6:00 p.m. Iveta Apkalna. *Davies Symphony Hall*

#### SUNDAY MAY 2, 2010

6:00 p.m. Cameron Carpenter. *Davies Symphony Hall*

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