Professor Dabiri named Prof of the Month

SANDHYA CHANDRASEKARAN
News Editor

Professor John Dabiri is no stranger to the Caltech campus. In fact, his summer research experience here is what drew him to this university.

He elaborates, “I hadn’t really heard about Caltech until the summer before my senior year at Princeton. One of my professors there suggested I come work with Prof. Mory Gharib. So I came as a SURF recipient and stayed in Fleming (room ‘pi’, which I think they renamed after the renovation of the South Houses. I’m glad because it was impossible to get mail at that address). I fell in love with Caltech during that summer, came back for grad school a year later, and I have been fortunate to be here ever since.”

Dabiri has had fantastic momentum building up to what will no doubt be an illustrious professional academic career. In 2010, he was the youngest recipient of one of 23 MacArthur “genius” grants.

He also heads the Biological Propulsion Laboratory, where he conducts fascinating research on aquatic locomotion, fluid dynamic energy conversion, and cardiac flows with the jellyfish as a model system. Aside from being an accomplished member of the noble league of researchers, Dabiri has been recognized by several of his students as an excellent professor. While he teaches as though he is a veteran, with a commanding knowledge over the information that allows him to easily relate it to his students, he has only recently begun teaching undergraduates.

He explains, “I’m currently teaching the Fluid Mechanics series ME 19ab. This is the first time I’m teaching it, and only the second time I’ve taught undergrads. A couple of years ago I taught Intro Biomechanics, which had mostly Bioengineering sophomores in it. I’ve turned that into a Freshman Seminar for this coming spring term. I usually teach graduate courses since my home department Aeronautics doesn’t have an undergraduate program. To be honest, I probably avoided teaching undergrads at first, because it is a big time commitment. But I’ve found teaching undergrads to be really enjoyable. Plus, I have tenure now, so I’m not as worried as I used to be about spending too much time on teaching.”

Dabiri attributes much of his relatibility to the narrow age gap between him and his students. He acknowledges, “I started here pretty young; I was 24 when I got the offer. So, there hasn’t always been the age gap between my students and me that makes [for a] typical professor-student relationship. That feeling has faded as I’ve gotten a little older, but it’s been a slow process.”

Obviously, this is not the only aspect that differentiates Dabiri’s courses from other professor’s. He structures his courses in a unique manner to maximally engage his students.

He reveals, “Although most of the classes I have taught existed in some form before me, I usually like to develop course notes from scratch. ‘I like to think of lecturing as storytelling, and this way I get to control the story. Of course, the basic principles of something like fluid mechanics don’t change too often, but I think that how you get those principles across should.

‘My courses are usually chalkboard-based lectures. I think there’s something useful in the process of copying down lecture notes. And frankly, I think if I tried to teach in a more free-form style off the top of my head, I would go off on way too many tangents. Especially in fluid mechanics, there are so many real-world examples to draw from that it’s not hard to go from talking about boundary layers to discussing Christina Aguilera’s hair. That only happened once, though. I try to incorporate videos outside of lecture, especially since fluid mechanics is such a dynamic topic.

‘I also have two phenomenal TAs, so we’ve been to able put together some fun competitions like one last term to build and theoretically model aluminum foil boats with maximum rock-carrying capacity. ‘This term we’re doing an egg drop from the roof of Millikan Library, and the students have to create theoretical models to predict how long it’ll take their egg to parachute to safety.’

Continued on page 3
Food with Mannion!

Do you like eating food?
How about free food at nice restaurants?
Ever want to tell the world exactly what you think of said food?
The Tech will be beginning a new column to chronicle the foodie experiences of new writers every other week... The Catch: They’ll be going head-to-head with Tom Mannion who will be reviewing the same restaurant. If you have ever thought you were more of a gourmand than our resident master chef, now’s your chance to prove it!
Email us for a spot on the list at tech@caltech.edu

ASCIT Minutes

Minutes February 19, 2012 by Laura Santoso

Officer’s present: Chris Hallacy, Laura Conwill, Diego Caporale, Mario Zubia, Michelle Tang, Laura Santoso
Absent: Margaret Chiu

President’s Report
1. Caltech Fight Song: $1000 prize sponsored from Studenski Fund to write a new fight song! If you’re interested in entering or learning more about the competition, talk to Mannion.
2. Athletics: Tennis courts are on key access now instead of number punch combos to make sure only people who are allowed to be using the courts are there. Athletics is also looking into keeping the pools open for more hours, but there’s not enough money to hire more lifeguards.
3. Bechtel Planning Committee: Hallacy, Christian Rivas, Margaret Chiu are the announced student representatives. There are a lot of other faculty and administrators on the committee. The committee’s role is to decide the spirit of the residence.

Officer’s Reports
1. IHC (LC)
   a. New Page President: Josh Tollefson
   b. New Avery Chancellor: Zach Rivkin
2. Director of Operations (Diego)
   a. SAC room: One of the rooms Diego wanted to allocate for club storage is the alumni phone room.
   b. Yearbooks: The editors want to try to redo the amendment to raise yearbook dues because we are really short on money. Trying to find a new place for Big T to work instead of working at the same place as The Tech.
3. Treasurer (Mario)
   a. Informed clubs that they can come to ASCIT to ask for specific third term funding, because yearly club funding will be done at the beginning of next year.
   b. Raised ASCIT dues: needs to check to make sure that the raised dues will be in effect for next year.
4. Social Representative (Michelle)
   a. Be a Kid Again Day: Will be Friday, March 2. There will be tons of Girlscout cookies, kid movies (Toy Story, Up, etc.), a combo bounce house, and a petting zoo!
   b. Trying to do an intercollegiate party now instead of a concert. Working out dates with Harvey Mudd.
5. Secretary (Laura)
   a. Olive walk board: will post pictures of new presidents once all are elected and keys come back.
KATIE NEITH
Science Writer

The field of study of Andrew Thompson, assistant professor of environmental science and engineering at Caltech, presents not only theoretical challenges but logistical ones as well. That’s because he is interested in the circulation and ecology of the Southern Ocean—a cold, remote marine area at the eastern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, part of the Antarctic Peninsula, part

called gliders. Last month, Thompson set off on a research cruise to deploy three of these new gliders, as well as some surface drifters that follow the currents and can be tracked with global positioning system (GPS) receivers.

"The currents and fronts in this region are important because they determine the transport and dispersal of krill—an important part of the ocean food chain—and also interact and modify the outflow of dense Antarctic Bottom Water, which eventually sinks to become the densest water in the world," says Thompson. "This part of the Weddell Sea is the injection point for krill and these dense water masses into the greater Southern Ocean."

The team, which included researchers from the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, the British Antarctic Survey, and from the University of East Anglia in the U.K., collected hydrographic data from the ship—such as the temperature, salinity, and density of the water—when they weren’t busy with the gliders.

We captured the signature of dense Antarctic Bottom Water at the lee of the berg and see evidence of it significantly disrupting the currents in the region."

The team also successfully tested an echo sounder that they attached to the gliders to measure krill biomass. The echo sounder uses sonar to detect krill swarms in the water column.

"A major purpose of the cruise was to demonstrate the capability of ocean gliders to play a key role in future polar ocean observing systems," he says.

And so far, the instruments have shown favorable results. The gliders were deployed on January 23, since then, they’ve been collecting samples and reporting data back to Thompson via satellite when they come to the surface every few hours. At press time, the Caltech glider had just completed its 200th dive. It, along with the other two gliders, will be recovered at the end of the experiment in mid-March.

In addition to research success, the crew, which returned to land in early February, had the chance to experience some marine wildlife in their natural habitat. The boat was visited by a number of friendly humpbacks and, while taking measurements from the sea, researchers found a pod of feeding humpbacks. For more pictures and details from the trip, visit Thompson’s website (http://gps.caltech.edu/~andrewt/gentoo/homepage.html).

The "journals" section gives personal accounts and images from the voyage.

Caltech professor explores the depths of the Arctic

The team lowers machinery for measuring conductivity, temperature, and depth into the ocean.

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- Professor Dabiri

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CASEY HANDMER
Staff Writer

Last weekend it was my sublime pleasure to partake in not one but two extraordinary shows in Downtown LA.

The first was the latest show by the underground circus group Lucent Dossier, entitled “When Lucent Met Herakut”. Although it lacked an overarching storyline, the show was a popping spectacle from the moment I stepped off of the dusty sidewalk until the moment the audience spoke not a word and the performance was over.

Consisting of a mix of steampunk and derrit aesthetics, inspirational face paint, dynamic set design and construction, live electronic music on classical instruments, things set on fire, and insanely energetic dancing, it was a seductive induction to a land of alternate logic and the celebration of the grotesque and peculiar.

Highlights included costume gloves with very long fingers reminiscent of Harajuku in mid-2007, and a sequence of ever evolving aerial performances in which an integer number of people hung from the ceiling with nothing more than a ribbon wrapped around each waist, often spinning another performer dangling by his finger nails. At the beginning of the second act a man in a set of costume overalls had his spray-painted with a star shaped stencil. Following the show, the theatre was transformed into an electronic dance party in which the audience, mostly dressed for the occasion, pulsed to distorted rhythms well into the night. I still hadn’t adequately sabotaged my academic program, so decided to spend Sunday evening at the LA Phil watching an organ recital.

Despite the sad infrequency of recitals on the magnificent instrument at Disney Hall, the ones I have attended thus far have all left a strong impression. The most recent recital was by Laszlo Fassang (which I also reviewed), a student at Notre Dame of one of the finest organists of our age, Olivier Latry. Latry, born in 1962, is one of the four organists titulariae at Notre Dame in Paris, an expert at improvisation, and also the artist of this evening’s recital!

In contrast to Fassang’s knowing wink at the standard repertoire, Latry did not even treat us to some improvisational fireworks. Instead he presented three pieces of the modern genre, each more ambitious than the last. Beginning with Heiller’s Tanz Toccata, a short and spritely piece that exploited the exquisite tuning and mechanical health of the Disney Hall organ, the audience was casually warned that they were in for the complete opposite of hymns and other standard organ fare.

Next he delivered Alain’s Three Dances, a 25-minute-long piece in which a very interesting theme is developed and repeated many times, each with a different tonal palette drawn from the ranks and inexorably moving towards a series of musical climaxes.

Following intermission, the real show began. While it will celebrate its 100th birthday next year, Stravinski’s “Le Sacre du Printemps” or “Rite of Spring” is a watershed work for ballet. It depicts through music and rhythm the ecstatic sacrificial dance of a young woman in a prehistoric tribal society. The final panel of Stravinski’s revolutionary triptych, beginning with Firebird (1910) and Petrushka (1911), 99 years of ensuing controversy combined with its enduring stylistic uniqueness have made it one of the most famous pieces of music ever written.

Originally written for a large symphony orchestra, and making full use of the tonal resources therein, reduction to a keyboard instrument presents a unique challenge. For this, Latry was joined on stage by fellow organist Shin-Young Lee. Together they played a four-hand, four-foot transcription of the work. To manipulate the stops of the organ, the page turner was pressed into service activating presets via a button on the side of the console. Slightly overtaxed in this capacity, Latry himself ended up turning half of the pages and performed stop changes where his cue had been missed! Such side distractions only added to the dramatic tension as the innovatively lit organ mimicked the orchestral sounds with all the precision and cohesion of an expert orchestral performance.

In Rite of Spring, Stravinski broke down many fundamental elements of western music, including tempo, pitch relations, rhythm conventions, and movement structure.

This left the composer free to recreate from scratch the music he needed to paint his sacrificial vision. Almost 100 years after its premiere we heard all that afresh, in a concert that combined the breadth of orchestral tone and color and the focus and vision of a single performer (or two, in this case).

Following a brief encore consisting of the last movement of the piece, the audience, mostly recognizable regulars of the organ recital series, filed from the hall into the balmy indigo evening, once again filled with a sort of collective personal satisfaction practically impossible to share with people for whom music after Mozart went inexorably down hill. Such is life.
Sloan awards young professors

KATIE NEITH Science Writer

Five Caltech assistant professors have been chosen as recipients of Sloan Research Fellowships for 2012. Awarded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, a not-for-profit grant making institution, the annual fellowships are given to scholars “whose achievements and potential identify them as rising stars, the next generation of scientific leaders.” The 126 researchers selected for this year’s prizes represent 51 colleges and universities across the United States and Canada. The Caltech faculty, who were nominated by their peers and selected for the award by a panel of senior scholars, include: Theodor Agapie (PhD ’07), assistant professor of chemistry; John Asher Johnson, assistant professor of astronomy; Yi Ni, assistant professor of mathematics; Christian Ott, assistant professor of theoretical astrophysics; and Sarah Reisman, assistant professor of chemistry. “Today’s Sloan Research Fellows are tomorrow’s Nobel Prize winners,” said Paul L. Joskow, president of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, in a press release. “These outstanding men and women are responsible for some of the most exciting science being done today. The Foundation is proud to support them during this pivotal stage of their careers.” All five winners joined the Caltech faculty in 2009. Chemist Agapie focuses his research on developing molecular solutions to problems related to energy, materials, and health, while astronomer Johnson works to detect and characterize exoplanets. Ni, a mathematician, is interested in three-dimensional topology and knot theory, and theoretical astrophysicist Ott builds computer models that simulate the death of massive stars. Reisman, an organic chemist, studies the field of natural product synthesis; the synthesis of organic molecules is critical to developing new pharmaceuticals.

Techers run half marathon

Left to right: Ott, Reisman, Johnson, Agapie, and Ni. - today.caltech.edu

MARCUS WOO Science Writer

On Sunday, 19 Techers donned red shirts emblazoned with a lightning bolt—the symbol for the superhero speedster Flash—and joined roughly 7000 people running this year’s Rock ’n’ Roll Pasadena Half Marathon. The runners started from the Rose Bowl, ran down the Arroyo Seco, and through Old Town Pasadena, eventually coming down Wilson Avenue on the west side of campus.

For all but three of the Caltech runners, it was their first long-distance race of any kind. One veteran runner, graduate student Shuo Pang, has done triathlons before and placed eighth overall in the 2012 Rose Bowl. The two decided to make the marathon a group event for their Rigorous Systems Research Group (RSRG). Soon, despite initial reservations, nearly everyone in the group—two postdocs, two undergraduates, and graduate students—took the plunge and signed up.

Sydney Garstang, the group’s administrator, designed the Flash T-shirts, which are a favorite of Sheldon Cooper, a Caltech physicist on the TV show The Big Bang Theory. The group cranked up the geek factor even more by drawing the symbol using lines of 1’s and 0’s—binary code that reads, “RSRG rocks the rock and roll half marathon.” They may do the race again next year, says Wierman, who ran while pushing his five-month-old daughter, Rebecca, on a stroller. “Everyone had a lot of fun—well, they had fun except for during the last mile of the race.”

Buckyballs found thousands of light-years from Earth

Buckyballs—those odd molecules made up of 60 carbon atoms arranged like hollow spheres—have been found, for the first time, in their solid form in space. Astronomers working with NASA’s Spitzer Space Telescope discovered particles made up of the stacked soccer ball–like molecules around a pair of stars 6,500 light-years from Earth. Formally called buckminsterfullerene, buckyballs are named after their resemblance to the geodesic domes that the late architect Buckminster Fuller designed. Spitzer has previously detected buckyballs in space in the form of gas. The new discovery of the particles suggests that some stellar environments must harbor large quantities of these molecules.

Looking to make some extra cash? Beckman and Ramo Auditoriums are hiring Ticket Takers, Late Ushers, and Regular Ushers. Students get to choose when they want to work, no experience needed, no hard labor involved, and they can work 2 hr. shifts, 3 hr. shifts, or 4 hr. shifts at $15 per hour.

*Requirements are a good attitude and a welcoming smile.

Get paid to attend concerts, performances, lectures, films, and even parties!

Go to http://events.caltech.edu/index.html for more info on public events at Caltech.

To apply, email Adam Jacobo (ajacobo@caltech.edu) or call (626)395-5907.
Clement Lacroute samples a taste of Electric Hannibal

CLEMENT LACROUTE
Staff Writer

All right Techers, this week’s review is about a very, very old album – at least on the Internet time scale. “Scouzi di d’Range” was self-produced by the “Electric Hannibal” jazz quartet in 2010 and distributed digitally over iTunes and Amazon. The reason I dare going so far back in time is this: you probably have never heard of them unless:

a) You live in Paris and spend every night in the jazz clubs.
b) You happen to know one of the band members.
c) You’re a true jazz aficionado who hunts for music over the internet.

What category do I fall in? That is private information, Sir, which I am happy to disclose. I’m under category b: I did my undergrad with the band leader, Alex, back in the early 1980s (“back in the day,” as we like to say). And even though he won’t talk to me anymore because I’m such a terrible guitarist, I have been paying attention to his musical career ever since.

The Electric Hannibal has evolved from being a “classic” acoustic jazz quartet to an electric one. Hatim Benmezziane plucks the double bass, Frederic Tarall rocks the drums, Arnaud Lahue plays the piano, and Alexandre Cauchon plays the guitar. After a number of concerts, they found that it was nearly impossible to get a decent piano sound in those Parisian jazz caves, so Arnaud switched to playing the electric organ.

This simple swap of instrument really helped the band refine their sound and style, and allowed them to step out of the well-defined territories as the musicians push the limits of their instruments to explore their own musical land. Alex says Pink Floyd’s “Dark Side of the Moon” partly inspired their first album, and you will find that this is no understatement. Scouzi Di D’Range will take you to unexplored territories as the musicians push the limits of their instruments in unconventional ways and pull unexpected sounds out of them.

The tracks often develop in forms can be truly mind-blowing. The lotus bleu” or the keyboard intro to “Hannibal et le lotos bleu” or the keyboard intro to “Travel Travel”, and the solos are can be truly mind-blowing. The good thing with this quartet is that it’s really more of a band. They’ve known each other for a long time now, and you can feel that they have an actual musical connection that allows each of them to reach his full potential.

In 2011, they wrote a score for Nosferatu that they played live with the movie (you can find videos on their website www.electrichannibal.com) and they of course frequented Paris’ jazz clubs. A new album should be out next September, and you can still find Scouzi Di D’Range on iTunes.

Oh, and what the heck does “scouzi di d’range” mean, by the way? You can roughly translate it by “Sorry for disturb,” which is what the subway musicians would say before starting to play a song—while it’s 7:00am and you’re all sleepy, trying to get to work.

In this case you’d better let them disturb you: it’s really worth the while.
Caltech baseball team tangles with Poets in weekend set

The Caltech baseball squad played their third straight conference series with a three-game series against Whittier with a single game at Caltech on Friday and a doubleheader at Whittier on Saturday.

Game One – Whittier 12, Caltech 0

After being held hitless in the opening inning, Whittier took advantage on Caltech miscues and timely hitting in scoring two runs in the second inning, and four in the third inning. During the two-inning stretch the Poets scored two unearned runs in addition to recording six hits in building the 6-0 lead.

Whittier plated single runs in the fifth and sixth innings respectively before putting the game away with a four-run eighth inning.

Cory Goodchild, the Poets leading hitter coming into the game, went 3-for-4 with two runs scored and four RBI's. Alex Albie Lavin recorded his first multi-hit game in his first season with the Beavers.

Game Two – Whittier 16, Caltech 2 (Box Score)

Michael Olmstead taking the win after going five innings. Ryan Schwenn pitched 7.0 innings of six-hit ball while striking out seven and gave up six hits with two unearned runs in addition to recording six hits in building the 6-0 lead.

Whittier plated single runs in the fifth and sixth innings respectively before putting the game away with a four-run eighth inning.

Caltech’s Daniel Sexton attempts to seduce the catcher. This usually works. Not during games, but the rest of the time, it does.

Albie Lavin recorded his first multi-hit game during SCIAC play this season with a 2-for-4 performance for Caltech.

Game Three – Whittier 16, Caltech 2 (Box Score)

Whittier jumped out to a 12-0 lead after three innings and never looked back in sweeping the afternoon’s contests.

Caltech scored their runs in the fifth and sixth innings respectively as Ryan Casey and Brian Penserini crossed the plate.

A five-run sixth inning for the Poets pushed their lead to 7-2. Whittier put the game away in the seventh as they scored six runs without recording an out to win the opening game of the doubleheader.

Caltech men’s tennis team swept by CMS

By the way, Biiszantz also had a complex with trainers’ rooms, a kitchen, and bathrooms right next to the courts, like inside the complex. At Caltech, we have to run a quarter of a mile to get to the trainer and bathrooms. At the risk of angering the athletics department, I’ll leave it at that.

Singles play was equally destructive, with the Stags sweeping in straight sets. Caltech’s Luka Mernik actually had a very solid match during his first start at #1 singles, losing 6-3, 6-2. Everybody else lost 6-0, 6-0, so that’s really saying something.

There’s also this raised viewing platform in the middle of the courts from which you can see all the matches. It kind of looked like those tree huts the Ewoks use in Return of the Jedi. It wasn’t all good, though. The fences were a bit short and, if you shank balls as much as the Caltech team does, that’s not a good thing. So, yeah, good job on those fences, Caltech.

The Beavers face St. John’s at home this Saturday. St. John’s is travelling all the way from Minnesota, so, I don’t know, jetlag might get ’em.

Oh, one more thing. They also had a really good sound system. Like, really good.

Singles Scores:

1. #39 Mac Cahill (CMS) def. Luka Mernik (CALTECH) 6-3, 6-2
2. Neil Katrappa (CMS) def. Jeff Shen (CALTECH) 6-0, 6-0
3. Andrew Duckworth (CMS) def. Amol Kamat (CALTECH) 6-0, 6-0
4. Victor Chien (CMS) def. Fred Zhao (CALTECH) 6-0, 6-0
5. Zhenya Pereverzin (CMS) def. Brian Kim (CALTECH) 6-0, 6-0
6. Max Mullen (CMS) def. Ryan Butterman (CALTECH) 6-0, 6-0

Sports Editor

AMOL KAMAT

Tiny Weekly Scoreboard

February 21, 2012

MEN’S BASKETBALL
AT REDLANDS
L, 91-65 FINAL

THE CALIFORNIA TECH
February 27, 2012
Hallett Smith Competition

The English Faculty is pleased to announce the annual Hallett Smith Competition honoring the finest essay devoted to Shakespeare. Only full-time, officially registered undergraduates are eligible to enter the competition. All submissions must be typed and double-spaced and should not exceed 4,000 words. The essay may be one prepared for a literature class or may be specifically written for this competition. No student can submit more than one essay. All contestants must submit a PDF attachment to elvington@hss.caltech.edu no later than April 16, 2012. This year’s prize will be $350, though the judging committee may divide the award in case of more than one outstanding submission. For more information, contact Prof. Jenijoy La Belle, jlb@hss.caltech.edu or Sini Elvington, elvington@hss.caltech.edu.

MCCLURE WRITING COMPETITIONS

ATTENTION WRITERS! The Division of the Humanities & Social Sciences is pleased to announce the annual Gordon McClure Memorial Communications Prize. This prize is awarded for excellence in writing. Only full-time students officially registered at Caltech as undergraduates are eligible to enter the competitions. This year, the McClure prize will be given for the best non-fiction prose in three categories: English, History, and Philosophy. Prize awards in each category are $500. Each category will be judged by members of the humanities faculty.

Entry Requirements:
- Each student is entitled to only one entry, per category, for the McClure Prize.
- All entries must be typed and double-spaced, sent as a PDF attachment to elvington@hss.caltech.edu. Include your name, which prize and category you are submitting to in both the subject line of your email and your file label (i.e. SamStone-McClure-English.pdf).
- Contestants should send submissions via email no later than 8:00 a.m., April 16, 2012.
- Include your address and phone number in submissions.
- Submissions of all McClure entries should not exceed 12,000 words.
- Essays for the McClure may be ones prepared for a humanities class or any good piece of original writing on a topic relevant to the humanities.
- Entries will not be returned.
- Previous winners in any one category are not eligible for competition in that category.

Winners will be announced in June, and the names of the winners will appear in the commencement program. The faculty may divide the award in each category in case of more than one outstanding submission. If you have any questions, contact Prof. Kristine Haugen, haugen@hss.caltech.edu or Sini Elvington, elvington@hss.caltech.edu.