CIRM and BCC present “A Vision for the Future: Treating Blindness with Stem Cells,” 7 p.m., Thur., Feb. 5

A Vision for the Future: Treating Blindness with Stem Cells is the topic of a talk by Dr. Dennis Clegg at Berkeley City College, 7-8 p.m., Thur., Feb. 5 in the college’s auditorium at 2050 Center St. The free and open to the public lecture will explore whether stem cells can be applied in novel therapies to treat eye diseases such as age related macular degeneration. Dr. Clegg is professor and co-director of the Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering Neuroscience at UC Santa Barbara. He is co-principal investigator of the California Project to Cure Blindness, a multidisciplinary effort to develop stem cell therapy for age-related macular degeneration. The lecture is part of a series sponsored by the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) and Berkeley City College.

Ms. Madeline Huberth and Dr. Ge Wang will present, “Making Music Socially: A Story of People and Technology in the 21st Century,” 7 p.m., Wed., Feb. 11 at Berkeley City College’s auditorium, 2050 Center St. The presentation is free and open to the public. Reserve your ticket at https://www.msri.org/general_events/20844.

Using case studies, ranging from Peruvian flute players to laptop orchestra (with live demonstrations and mini-performances) and music-making on mobile devices, Dr. Wang and Ms. Huberth will discuss recent developments in thinking about and creating music socially. Both design musical instruments from computers, make music with the instruments, and devise experiments from the music to learn about people and the brain. They also direct the Stanford Laptop Orchestra (SLOrk).

Music is rooted in its role as a social phenomenon, but evolution of the “social” nature of music continues. Over the past 100 years, development of the radio, recording, the computer, the Internet, and mobile devices, have made music a ubiquitous part of our everyday experience, but also have shaped it into a passive and easily consumable commodity. Even so, practices in participatory music-making exist on a more traditional, cultural level; they use new technologies that highlight how music as a social endeavor continues to serve deeply meaningful purposes.

Ms. Huberth is a doctoral candidate at Stanford University’s Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA). Her research investigates musically-induced emotions and neural responses to musical sounds, and more broadly the cognitive/emotional elements associated with music performance and listening. Dr. Wang is an assistant professor at CCRMA; he researches audio programming languages, laptop orchestra, and expressive social music for mobile devices. He is the author of the ChucK music programming language, and as co-founder of mobile music startup Smule, he designed the iPhone’s Ocarina and Magic Piano.

Their talk is part of the “Not on the Test: The Pleasures and Uses of Mathematics” series of six public lectures in 2014–15, which are jointly presented by the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) and Berkeley City College (BCC). They are made possible with funding from the Simons Foundation.

BCC celebrates “Fightin’ Words: 25 Years of Provocative Poetry and Prose” from Oakland’s PEN, 6:30 p.m., Tue., Feb. 10

A celebration of Fightin’ Words: 25 Years of Provocative Poetry and Prose from “The Blue-Collar” PEN, Oakland’s new poetry and prose anthology, is set for 6:30-9:30 p.m. Tue., Feb. 10, in BCC’s Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

Featuring works by luminaries such as Rebecca Solnit and MacArthur Fellow Ishmael Reed as well as writers you will be glad to meet for the first time, Fightin’ Words bears witness to a vibrant American literary tradition well outside mainstream consciousness. Pieces span the spectrum of human emotion: from rage, as in Floyd Salas’s declamation against torture, to grief in CB Follett’s “Words to the Mother Whose Son Shot My Son,” to joy and contentment in the work of California poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera. They range in subject from Kitty Kelley’s exposé of the revenge tactics of George H. W. Bush to Paul Krassner’s account of the night Ken Kesey invited him to a Grateful Dead concert at the pyramids of Giza.

Reminder: Let your students know that the last day to enroll for full semester classes is Feb. 1

Remind your students that the last day that they can enroll for full semester classes is Sun., Feb. 1. That is also the last day they can withdraw from classes without a W or to collect a refund. Students can indicate that they wish to take a class for a letter grade or Pass/No Pass by Fri., Feb. 6.
All invited to “One Billion Rising” dance to combat global violence against women 12:15, Tue., Feb. 10

As part of a worldwide program and actions to bring attention to global violence against women and efforts to combat it, Berkeley City College’s Global Studies Club will sponsor a Speak Out/Dance on 12:15-1:15 p.m., Tue., Feb. 10 in the college’s Atrium. BCC’s activity will be one of many international events happening that day. For “One Billion Rising,” started by Eve Ensler, women’s rights activist, author, playwright and filmmaker. All are invited to dance and support this effort to combat violence against women. For details, contact Joan Berezin at jberezin@peralta.edu.

Special Report: Rachel Mercy Simpson leads aid project for Liberia reporters

BCC’s Rachel Mercy Simpson, Multimedia Arts Department, knew she had to step in when she heard the publisher of FrontPageAfrica describe to NPR’s “On the Media” the challenges he and his team of reporters were going through on the front line of the Ebola outbreak in Liberia.

“As an award-winning newspaper, FrontPageAfrica is in a powerful position to communicate with people across West Africa, to encourage safer practices and to reduce the spread of Ebola. FPA reporters put their lives on the line to cover the stories even though they lack rudimentary safety gear. I want to help them out,” she wrote to her family and colleagues.

When she learned from the NPR interview that FrontPageAfrica reporters lacked safety gear, Rachel immediately contacted the FrontPageAfrica publisher and asked how she could help. “As a filmmaker, I grabbed the danger of not having a telephoto lens and how FPA reporters needed to get close to people who were very sick in order to photograph them.”

In only a matter of weeks, she ordered a consignment of anti-Ebola gear and cameras for the FrontPageAfrica crew. The donations were: 100 PPE suits and boots, plus two Canon DSLR cameras with multiple telephoto lenses, tripods and pelican cases to enable reporters and photographers to go about their job more safely. After ordering the gear, reporters from BBC and NPR, plus airlines and doctors from around the world all offered to help find people traveling to Liberia and to assist with the delivery.

The late Washington Post’s Michel Ducille and Lenny Bernstein, who were going to Liberia for a second stint of Ebola coverage, offered to transport the cameras. The remainder of safety gear was brought by Steve and Jen Butwill, an American couple who run a health clinic they opened in the beginning of 2013 located in the Yarnee District of River Cess County on the Po River. United Airlines permitted the doctors to carry 12 bags free of charge. In addition to Rachel’s donation, the Post also made donations of six Dell Laptops and additional camera accessories.