



# News and Notes

March 2010

The purpose of Music Ed Ventures is to search for and practice ways of making music and interacting with people that preserve and celebrate the dignity of both. As a guiding principle, this purpose will focus our work on:

1. Practices that foster interactive, facilitative learning environments.
2. Strategies that empower the learner within the context of music experience and study.
3. Networks that encourage collaboration between diverse disciplines, professionals, and interest groups.

**Are you interested in hosting a workshop or class in your area? Send requests to the email address shown above, to be routed to the appropriate presenters/coordinators.**

## From Our President *Deb Eikenbary, Indiana*

Can it really be that in just a few days we will be gathering again in Portland to share our skills and learn from one another?? This is truly a Brigadoon –type gathering where it seems like only yesterday we chatted and laughed but it's been a year!

I want to thank the members of the wonderful organization for all the support and inspiration throughout the years I am confident that the good things will keep right on happening for many more!

Thanks to

- Pam Bridgehouse for all her work as Editor and patience in nudging us to submit those articles as well as her work as secretary for Board Meetings and Meetings of the Membership.
- Mary Springer for her 6 years as President-Elect, President, and Past President! Her dedication to this organization is astounding – and keeps us all remembering our sense of humor!
- Paige Macklin for long hours spent as Treasurer. Her steady influence has kept us on track financially.
- Marilyn Winter for tackling the commitment of President-elect who has chaired the preparations for what promises to be a great conference.
- Tony Williamson who has been our coordinator with the hotel yet again. He keeps us on the up and up and was one of my first friends in this organization. We would be much the poorer without his dedication not to mention how often he keeps us smiling.

See you in Portland!

- Deb

### Officers:

**President:** Deb Eikenbary, Indiana  
**President Elect:** Marilyn Winter, MT  
**Past President:** Mary Springer, WA  
**Secretary:** Pam Bridgehouse, OR  
**Treasurer:** Paige Macklin, MN  
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Bekka Butter Grathwol, MN  
Yoshie Kaneko, Japan  
Gina Adoff, MT  
Judy Fjell, MT  
**Membership Coordinator:**  
Paige Macklin, MN

## Conference 2010 Hotel Reservations

**Red Lion Hotel Convention Center**  
1021 NE Grand Ave. (off Interstate 5 at exit 302A)  
Portland, OR 97232

**Room Reservations: 1-800-343-1822**

**Ask for Music Ed Ventures rate: \$92 + tax (about 12.5%)**  
*(Accommodations for up to four people per room)*

*News and Notes* is the monthly communication of Music Ed Ventures, Inc. (MEI). Regular features will keep members and friends up to date on coming events and the latest teaching techniques, tips and strategies. Submissions are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication and may be submitted months in advance, indicating the month in which they are to be published. The committee reserves the right to select material to be published according to length and appropriateness. Articles should be 200-325 words. Visuals should be scanned and submitted as PDF or jpeg files. Submissions may be sent to [PamBridgehouse@hughes.net](mailto:PamBridgehouse@hughes.net) and may be edited to accommodate space limitations.

# Conference 2010

March 5 & 6 in Portland, Oregon

(Update for returning members on March 4)

***It's Not Too Late ~ Register at the Door***  
***Present your completed registration form***  
***& pay at the door***

Connections Between Educational Philosophies with Dr. Peggy Bennett

Healthy Voices with Dr. Anna Langness

Potpourri of Puzzles for Reading

Four Faces of a Song

Dancing, Song Games, and Singing in the Education of Children

plus

Teaching English with Music by our friends from Japan

## Conference and Membership Fees *(in US dollars)*

Two-Day Conference Fee	One-Day Conference Fee (check one) ___Fri ___ Sat
Members \$130 _____	Members \$80 _____
Non-members \$165 _____	Non-members \$105 _____
Retirees \$ 80 _____	Retirees \$60 _____
Students no charge	Students no charge
Friday night banquet \$35 _____	Friday night banquet \$35 _____

*Lunches are included in registration (includes gratuity and tax)*

Membership: Regular \$35 \_\_\_ Sustaining \$50 \_\_\_ Patron \$100 \_\_\_ Student \$10 \_\_\_

*(Deduct \$5.00 if posted before February 7, 2010)*

TOTAL ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_

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## My Oh My, O Myelin!

Peggy D. Bennett, PhD  
Professor of Music Education  
Oberlin College Conservatory of Music  
Recipient, 2009 Mary Helen Richards Lectureship

The “nature or nurture” argument has been plumbed for centuries, both sides arguing convincingly about whether our talents are with us at birth or whether they are trained into us. Just as beliefs about intelligence have shifted in recent years, so is the concept of talent changing, especially if you believe the premise of a new book about talent.

In his recent book, *The Talent Code: Greatness Isn't Born. It's Grown. Here's How*, Daniel Coyle offers a new explanation for talent. Growing talent, according to Coyle, is based in the action of “deep practice” and the consequent bodily production of a lipid nerve-wrap called “myelin.”

Coyle began a quest to answer, “What is talent?” by traveling to places that he considered “talent hot beds.” Aiming to find out why and how certain groups excelled, especially against the odds, Coyle sought “hot beds” that were wildly successful in spite of seemingly deprived circumstances: a penniless Russian tennis club, an obscure music school in Dallas, a “poor, scantily educated” family of writers in Britain, women’s golfers of South Korean, and baseball players from the Dominican Republic (to name a few).

What Coyle discovered was this: when we are “forced to slow down, make errors, and correct them,” operating at the edges of our abilities, we are actually *growing* talent, and we are doing this through what Coyle calls *deep practicing*. Deep practice is the act of figuring out what went wrong when we make mistakes. Deep practice is using time more efficiently.

“Your small efforts produce big, lasting results. You have positioned yourself at a place of leverage where you can capture failure and turn it into skill. The trick is to choose a goal just beyond your present abilities; to target the struggle. Thrashing blindly doesn’t help. Reaching does.”

As Coyle says, it is the “slipping and stumbling as we walk up an ice covered hill that ends up making us swift and graceful. The paradox is that struggling in targeted ways makes us smarter.” Many of us have a visceral reaction to our mistakes, because of all the guilt- and shame-laden messages we tell ourselves about what they mean. But, what if we reframed our errors and instead considered them “stepping stones?” What if, when we make a mistake, we take a cue from Ben Zander’s book and through our arms high in the air to proclaim, “How FAScinating!”

“The people inside the talent hotbeds are engaged in an activity that seems, on the face of it, strange and surprising. They are seeking out the slippery hills. . . . they are purposely operating at the edges of their ability, so they will screw up. And somehow screwing up is making them better.”

I personally related this notion of “figuring it out” to solving Sudoku puzzles. When I first encountered them, I absolutely could not figure out how to solve the puzzles. I soon just *knew* that I was not mathematically inclined enough to solve even the simplest puzzle. And, I learned Sudoku in isolation: I did not talk with anyone who “worked” them, I created my own system for solving them, and I knew of no one else’s strategies for figuring out which number went in which box. *But*, I figured it out. Although I am far, far from a Sudoku talent, it was the tenacity (some would call it stubbornness!) I had for, “I *will* figure this out!” that kept me staring at those numbers and boxes. Now, I thoroughly enjoy them even when I spend hours trying to figure out what *one* number to place in *one* box!

To make his point about how errors aid in the learning process, Coyle designed two lists of paired words. Read through each list.

A	B
Ocean/breeze	bread/b_tter
Leaf/tree	music/l_rics
Sweet/sour	sh_e/sock
Movie/actress	phone/bo_k
Gasoline/engine	chi_s/salsa
High school/college	pen_il/paper
Turkey/stuffing	river/b_at
Fruit/vegetable	be_r/wine
Computer/chip	television/rad_o
Chair/couch	l_nch/dinner

Now, without looking at the list, recall as many word pairs as you can.

Were you able to recall more pairs from List A or List B? “If you’re like most people, it won’t even be close,” says Coyle.

“Your IQ did not increase while you looked at column B. You didn’t feel different. You weren’t touched by genius (sorry). But when you encountered the words with blank spaces, something both imperceptible and profound happened. You stopped. You stumbled ever so briefly, then figured it out. You experienced a microsecond of struggle, and that microsecond made all the difference. You didn’t practice harder when you looked at column B. You practiced deeper.”

So, how does this “deep practice” relate to what Coyle states is the “holy grail” of skill-building, myelin? First, it is important to answer the question, “What is myelin?”

Imagine the rubber coating that surrounds an electrical wire. Rubber coating is to an electrical wire as myelin is to nerve fibers. The insulation on an electric wire does not produce or regulate electricity, rather its very important role is to protect the electrical current from leaking out and to “assist” the electrical impulse to be more efficient as it flows through the insulation.

Myelin serves nerve fibers in the same way that rubber coating serves electrical wire: it protects, insulates, and provides efficient conduction. A whitish, fatty substance, myelin is a sheath that “grows” on nerve fibers, wrapping them with a lipid protector that Coyle says answers the question about how talent is “grown.”

When we practice (fire our circuits) in the right way, our myelin responds by wrapping layers of insulation around the neural circuit, each new layer adding a bit more skill and speed. The thicker the myelin gets, the better it insulates, and the faster and more accurate our movements and thoughts become.

Scientists studying myelinated nerve fibers have not always understood the purpose or origin of this fatty substance. In earlier times (without the technology to find the answers), researchers wondered: Are nerves hollow? Is myelin inside the nerve fiber or around it? Is myelin secreted by the axon or formed by another cell?

According to Coyle, myelin grows in response to certain signals produced by deep practice, and the build-up of myelin is what solidifies a skill, it is what “grows” talent. So, the more we “figure it out,” encounter and overcome errors, and “deep practice” by spending focused time efficiently, pushing ourselves just past our comfort levels, the more we are building our stores of myelin-wrapped nerves!

According to Coyle, myelin is an amazing conduit to our skill development.

1. It’s universal: everyone can grow it throughout life, but most swiftly in childhood
2. It’s indiscriminate: its growth enables all skills, mental and physical
3. It’s imperceptible: we can’t see or feel it, and we can sense its increase only by seeing the effects

As I read Coyle's descriptions of the "talent hot beds" and the ways in which talent is grown, I was reminded of Gladwell's idea that it takes 10,000 hours of "hard practice" to be an expert, that "Ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness." (p. 41) Like Coyle, Gladwell tells abundant, engaging stories of disparate individuals who make the 10,000 hour rule for achieving greatness seem quite believable.

Coyle begins *The Talent Code* by describing his fascination with video of a young clarinetist named "Clarissa." Borrowed from Australian music educator Gary McPherson's research project, a six-minute video of 13-year-old Clarissa's practicing prompted Coyle to identify "deep practice" as a key component of his theory of the talent code. Her teachers and parents (and Clarissa herself) pronounced Clarissa to be "musically mediocre" with no musical gifts. Yet, when Coyle watched one six-minute practice session, he was so stunned by what happened with Clarissa's focus, errors, corrections, and improvement, that he said the video should have been named: *The Girl Who Did a Month's Worth of Practice in Six Minutes*.

Embracing mistakes, welcoming difficulty, and soliciting toil may seem counterintuitive as pathways toward ease. Yet, if we believe what Coyle proposes in his book, they may be the only paths to take if we want to "break the code" and experience the *facility of skills* that manifest themselves as our talents. Happy climbing!

## Sources

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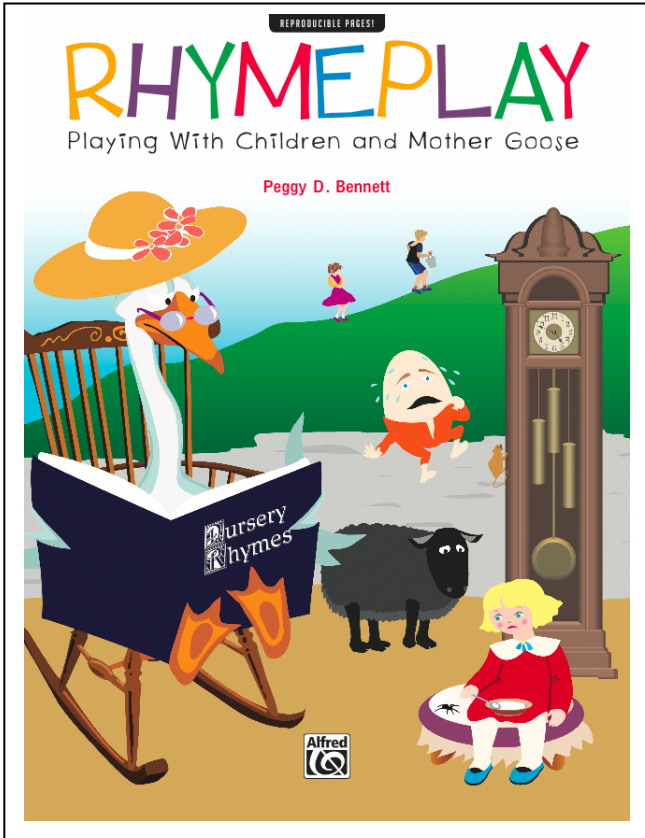
Coyle, Daniel (2009). *The talent code: Greatness isn't born. It's grown. Here's how*. New York: Bantam Books.  
[Quotes above are taken from an ebook without page numbers.]

Gladwell, Malcolm (2008). *Outliers*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company.  
[I also highly recommend Gladwell's two previous books: *The Tipping Point* and *Blink*]

Zander, Rosamund Stone & Zander, Benjamin (2000). *The art of possibility: Transforming professional and personal life*. New York: Penguin.

# Announcing a New Book by Peggy D. Bennett

Charming the senses of young children is key to the spirit of *RhymePlay*. The simplicity and musical lilt of Mother Goose rhymes engage and enchant children as they play with language, dexterity and imagination. Accompanying the delightful rhymes are wonderfully photographed fingerplay movements, ready for immediate use.



Reproducible Picture Cards enhance the lessons, making it easy to prepare and have students actively engaged in the lesson.

Designed for the early childhood classroom, *RhymePlay* includes a wealth of energizing and imaginative activities, focusing on building children's organizational, expressive, and memory skills.

"Storymaking" and "Playlets" allow children to develop expressiveness and understanding as they actively explore the imaginary world of the rhymes. "ReadingPlay" exercises lead children toward literacy. Each of the charming finger plays and activities in *RhymePlay* will captivate and enchant children while developing their senses, minds, and social skills. [back cover]

*RhymePlay* is written for parents, teachers, and early childhood caregivers.

Bennett, Peggy D. (2010). *RhymePlay: Playing with Children and Mother Goose*. Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing. ISBN 10: 0-7390-6146-1 ISBN-13: 978-0-7390-6146-6

Cost: \$24.95

Order: Available February 1, from your favorite music store, Alfred.com, Amazon.com

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

Music EdVentures, Inc.

# UPDATE 2010

Thursday, March 4, 2010 • Red Lion Inn • Portland, OR

Update is an informal pre-conference gathering in which MEI members share classroom ideas with other members. The only requirement for attendance at Update sessions is MEI membership, so be sure to join.

10:00-10:10 **Opening**

10:10-10:30 **The Pretty Princess Story** - Heather Hicks (BC)

10:30-10:50 **Penmanship and Singing**: Making learning and practice joyful - Daisy Cochran (AZ)

10:50-11:10 **Fun with Boomwhackers** - Esther Campbell (WA)

11:10-11:20 **BREAK**

11:20-12:00 Thesis Summary: **The Life and Work of Mary Helen Richards** - Kari Wendroth (MN)

12:00-1:15 **LUNCH**

1:20-1:40 **Bele Kawa: African Dance** - LeAnne McClellan (WA)

1:40-2:20 **Song Games and Learner Traits**: Making the Connection Visible - Kate McCabe (BC)

2:20-3:00 **Singing English in Education** - Bonnie Davison (BC)

3:00-3:10 **BREAK**

3:10-4:20 **Making the Connection with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**: Song Experience Games for Families, Teachers and Caregivers - Bev Kenik (CA) & Judy Fjell (MT)

## Music EdVentures Conference 2010

### Friday, March 5

8:45 - 9:00 **Welcome**

9:00 – 10:30 **Four Faces of A Song**

- Introducing a Song – Sandy Murray (BC), Tony Williamson (OR)
- Notation – Deb Eikenbary (IN)
- Instruments – Anne Mendenhall/Paige Macklin (MN)

10:30 – 10:40 **Break**

10:40 – 11:00 **Interlude** – Judy Fjell (MT)

11:00 - 12:30 **Big Thinkers and Big Thoughts: Educational Connections** – Peggy Bennett (MT, OH)

12:30 – 1:45 **Lunch**

1:45 – 2:30 **Simple Song Games** – Kathi Smith (OR), Mary Springer (WA)

2:30 – 2:40 **Break**

2:40 – 3:00 **Interlude** – Pam Vellutini (OR)

3:00 – 4:00 **How Not To Teach Music Unmusically: Observations From a Theory Nerd** – Douglas Bartholomew (MT)

4:00 – 4:30 **1-2-3 Dancing with Gina Adoff** (MT)

4:30 – 4:45 **Fifteen with Fleurette** (BC)

**6:15 – Social time and Banquet**

## **Saturday, March 6**

8:15 – 8:45 **Registration**

8:45 – 9:00 **Good Morning**

9:00 – 10:30 **Potpourri of Puzzles for Reading** – Tony Williamson (OR), Sandy Murray (BC),  
Kate Smith (BC) Anna Langness (CO)

10:30 – 10:40 **Break**

10:40 – 11:00 **Interlude** – Mary Springer (WA)

11:00 – 12:30 **Voice Education for Children**  
Anna Langness (CO)

12:30 – 1:45 **Lunch**

1:45 – 3:00 **English EdVentures from Japan**

3:00 – 3:45 **Singing by Heart** – Annette Coffin (BC)

3:45 – 4:00 **Fifteen with Fleurette** (BC)

4:15 – 5:15 **Business Meeting**