



# 10.03.05 WASHINGTON SQUARE NEWS

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## Lynch tells students, 'Your brain needs this'

by Andrew Tran  
STAFF WRITER

When celebrities tout their own religions, the result is often a disaster. Scientology, anyone?

So when famed director David Lynch came to speak about his life and his experiences with transcendental meditation, students were more drawn by his cinematic experience than his personal beliefs.

"I love David, I love his films and I just want to see him," Tisch junior Alex Stanilof, who was first in a line circling the block, said before the event. "If it was him playing 'Frogger,' I would probably watch it."

But Lynch did more than play archaic video games - he spoke to a packed room in Cantor Film Center in two sessions, hoping to give students the gift of enlightenment. Lynch, the enigmatic director of movies such as "Blue Velvet" and "Mulholland Drive," is a proud supporter of the popular spiritual practice of transcendental meditation, and hopes to raise \$7 billion for the cause.

The event was advertised on Facebook.com, promising students an evening with David Lynch and a free DVD. There was no mention of transcendental meditation on the advertisement which had the tagline, "Your brain needs this."

Besides Lynch, the event featured two scientific experts: Dr. John Hagelin, best known for his appearance in the film "What the #\$\*! Do We (K)now!?", and Dr. Fred Travis, director of the Iowa-based Maharishi University of Management.

The event opened with a q-and-a session, much to the delight of eager fans, who mostly asked about Lynch's experiences as a director rather than about his meditation practices. Lynch, a recluse who has said he adamantly dislikes specific questions about his films, answered obligingly.

Afterwards, Lynch gave a testimonial about the effects of transcendental meditation, which he said gave such benefits as "pure bliss" and "pure universal love."

Lynch endorsed the use of the practice to reach world peace and also to help aspiring film makers.

"I think you would be better filmmakers, happier filmmakers, if you added this to your life," Lynch said.



Director David Lynch tells a packed crowd about transcendental meditation at the Cantor Film Center on Thursday. PHOTO: PERRY KROLL /WSN

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### Religious clubs fill community void

"When College of Arts and Science (CAS) senior Joe Chiang arrived on campus four years ago, like most students, he sought out new friends shortly after settling into his dorm room. However, he wasn't



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Lynch said major ideas for his film "Mulholland Drive" came to him during one of his meditation sessions, which he has practiced for 20 minutes twice a day for the last 30 years.

looking in his classes or at the local bar; rather, he l"

Hagelin said the practice had many benefits, including the ability to reverse ADHD.

"The experience makes you effectively invincible," Hagelin said. "Then you really become free to just follow your feelings and emotions. To love freely without worry of getting hurt because there is really no hurt possible."

Travis, dubbed by Hagelin "the foremost expert on meditation," attempted to prove the positive effects of the practice by connecting transcendental meditation practitioner Shane Zisman to an electroencephalogram (EEG) machine, a device that monitors brain waves.

As Zisman entered a meditative state, the readings became less tumultuous and more concentrated and rhythmic.

The readings were enough to convince some students of the benefits of transcendental meditation.

"I came here for David Lynch, but I found that transcendental meditation and the way it was presented with EEG very interesting, and convinced me to learn more about it," CAS sophomore Brett Ackerman said.

Many students, however, remained skeptical of the practice.

"When the guy was meditating there was a slight change [in the EEG scan] but nothing substantial. The change could have been caused because his eyes were closed," Gallatin junior Ryan Zweng said. He said he thought the whole promotion was an elaborate sales pitch.

"They never even taught us how to meditate," he said.

Lynch interrupted filming "Inland Empire," to tour East Coast colleges. His group has stopped at University of Michigan, American University, University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, Emerson College and Brown University over the last week, in addition to NYU. According to the tour's website, Lynch is planning a West Coast tour soon. •

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