

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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They've got the beat

Percussion Studio brings unconventional instruments to the music scene

By Nishat Fatima
THE BATTALION

For Lauren Esposito, a senior biology major, a Percussion Studio performance is anything but predictable.

"You never know what to expect at a Percussion Studio performance. Their performances are fun and exciting, and they are off the wall," Esposito said. "They (are) very different from anything I had ever seen."

Esposito said her experience with Percussion Studio did not end with the performance. She was so impressed with the group's talent, she decided to audition and has been performing with Percussion Studio ever since.

Percussion Studio, a University-recognized music group with 35 members, choreographs drum routines using a wide variety of common and uncommon instruments such as water jugs, trash cans and other household items.

Liz Fausak, president of Percussion Studio and a senior electrical engineering major, said the group adds a new spin to the percussion genre.

"We are known for our performances that include percussion from conventional and unconventional means, such as plastic tubes and water jugs," Fausak said. "Although we have aspects similar to Stomp and Blue Man Group, we are very different because we incorporate a variety of medias such as dance and videos into our shows. We put our own spin on it."

Fausak said Percussion Studio's members, who are divided into different "sound" groups, strive to find the combination of instruments that create the most unique sound.

"In the past we have used wooden boxes, PVC pipes, wheelchairs, kitchen sinks, jock strap cups and even a CPR dummy," Fausak said. "We basically try to find things that we can make a cool sound with, and combine them to create an entertaining ensemble."

The group has gained public exposure since its origination in 1999, and has performed at two First Yells, four MSC Variety Shows, Master BBQ and Whooping Weekend, among several other events. Jay Rudinger, a Percussion Studio member and a junior industrial engineering major, said members are constantly on the look-out for household items that can be used as instruments.

"Out of anything that we see, if we like it, we will use it," Rudinger said. "We just have a good time on the stage hitting around on things."

In addition to having an ear for pseudo-instruments, Percussion Studio members are required to have percussion-playing experience. Justin Winn, vice president of Percussion Studio and a senior civil engineering major, said the requirement has not deterred a steady flow of Percussion Studio hopefuls from auditioning.

"Back when it first started, we would let anybody join because we desperately needed people," Winn said. "It has grown so much over the years that we have to have auditions now and we have a

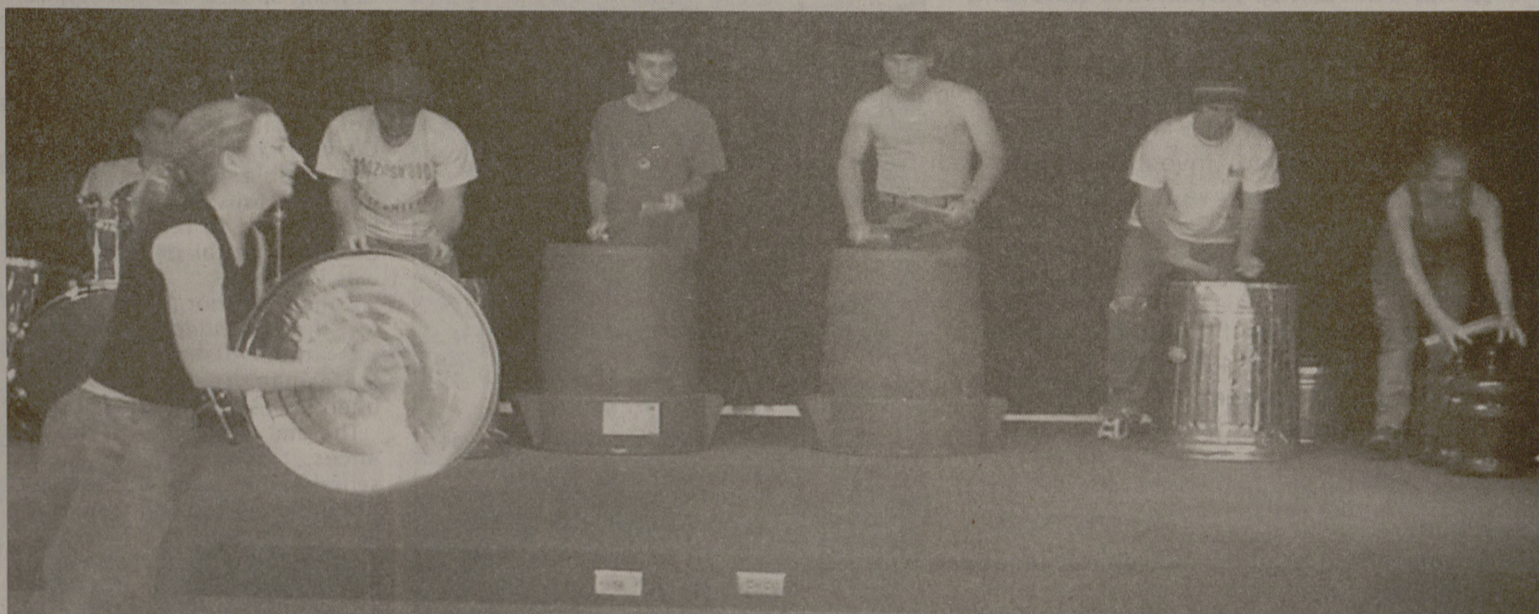


PHOTO COURTESY OF PERCUSSION STUDIO

Percussion Studio performs for Destination Imagination, an after-school academic program, at South Knoll Elementary School in College Station on Tuesday, Oct. 29. The group's next performance will be on Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

prerequisite of having percussion experience. We have a lot of people try out now."

In addition to percussion know-how, Winn said, making the audience laugh contributes to the performance's style.

"We rely on visual performance and humor," Winn said. "We usually have somebody in the show who we call the 'idiot' or the 'goat,' who acts like a dumb guy and messes up the ensemble. It's a great humorous element and we always get a great response from the audience."

Fausak said the group strives to add elements of drama to each performance as well.

"We aim to create a theatrical presentation rather than just a musical performance," Fausak said. "We enhance our shows through different ways like having dancing in the background, using glow in the dark objects and mixing strange voices in to the show."

Fausak said Percussion Studio has worked with other University organizations to add to the performance's quality.

"In the past we have worked with Freudian Slip who played with us and acted like our emcees, and we also worked with Aggie SWAMP (Screenwriting, Acting, and Movie Production) club to have interesting video tapes and recordings playing during the perform-

ance," Fausak said. "There is always an appearance by Michael Jackson, in either voice form or by having somebody dress like him."

Jason Ledlie, a Percussion Studio officer and a senior psychology major, said membership into the group has intangible rewards.

"All (of Percussion Studio's members) are only in it because they enjoy playing," Ledlie said. "We practice long hours with the only gratification being the opportunity to perform. It's not a private band, and we don't make any money. We all just love playing."

Jamie Baker, a sophomore industrial engineering major, has attended four percussion studio performances, and said it was a welcome change from conventional band performances.

"The experience of seeing a Percussion Studio show definitely isn't like any regular band that you will see," Baker said. "They are absolutely awesome because there is a lot more variety and effects in their shows. You have the 'Stomp'-type aspect, and at the same time (there is) traditional percussion as well. All of their shows that I have been to were all amazing. They have performances that you can really enjoy and get into."

Percussion Studio's next performance, "Percussionstudio.org Bowl," will take place on Dec. 10 at 7:30 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium. For more information, visit www.percussionstudio.org.

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