



Photo by Alex Milstein - Staff Writer

The African Ensemble performs at Lipinsky Auditorium last Thursday.

## UNCA Percussion Ensemble plays concert in Lipinsky

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The drum solo holds a reputation as the ultimate signifier of excess. When one imagines percussion compositions, one pictures a sweat-soaked drummer, high on speed, pounding at toms frantically for 10 minutes straight as the audience quickly loses patience.

Fortunately, UNC Asheville music department's Percussion Ensemble concert did not resemble a live take of Led Zeppelin's "Moby Dick." Nine students, percussion experts and rookies alike, tore through a variety of tunes on the marimba, xylophone and drum kit, among other instruments.

The ensemble's performance in Lipinsky last Thursday served as the culmination of their hard work this semester and gave them a chance to show off their skills before a live audience.

However, the concert was nearly a fiasco when key member Davis Brock

was stricken with kidney stones and had to drop off the bill.

"I didn't even know until we were setting up," said **Alex Farrar, a junior music technology student.** "He was all white in the face, and I was like, 'What's wrong, are you nervous or something?' And he was like, 'No, I have a kidney stone.'"

Brock decided he could not perform shortly before the concert began, but the ensemble managed to conceal the missing elements in most of their numbers.

"In most of the songs, Davis had a really important part. It kind of sounded like the body was taken out because he plays mostly chords, but I thought 'Don't Wake the Pig' came out pretty well," Farrar said. "It's hard to say when you're playing, because I was focusing really hard on what I was doing, but I probably thought that one sounded the best."

"Don't Wake the Pig" was an origi-

nal composition by the ensemble's own **Max Witt, a freshman music student** who spends his musical education and energy on composing. The piece was inspired by Witt's pet pig, with dynamic shifts in tempo and mood reflecting the little porker's demeanor when her slumber is disturbed.

"My miniature pot-bellied pig, Aretha, is a glorious, black little pig," Witt said. "She's sassy when she's woken up, so the whole piece starts out slow when she's asleep, and then when she wakes up, it's pretty fast and bombastic."

Witt's piece was not the only piece composed by an ensemble member. Music student Dustin Hooper also wrote a piece entitled "Kitchen Witches," which the group performed using coffee cans, pots, pans and other kitchen implements with Hooper providing buzzing melody with a straw.

"I always make it clear at the beginning of the semester that if anybody

wants to write something, we welcome it," said **Matt Richmond, music lecturer and director of the Percussion Ensemble.** "This group is really good at finding new sounds and being creative, and I really encourage the students to write for it as much as they can."

Richmond has directed the Percussion Ensemble every year since he began teaching at UNCA. He said he finds the ensemble a great opportunity for students to learn about the diverse nature of percussion composition and performance.

"Part of being a percussionist is that you have to play a lot of different instruments," Richmond said. "I wouldn't want somebody to just play the marimba the whole time or just play the drum set the whole time. You want to give them a variety of experience."

Fortunately, the students did not skimp on variety when suggesting tunes for the concert. The group opened