

Group dances to beat of different drum

By Amanda Bricker
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

Though only 14 voices, the room suddenly fills with the sound of their song.

Then the drums come in with a rhythmic pulse, as they invite the dancers to begin their dance.

With music, dance, theatrical performances and a whole lot of spirit, the NOMMO Performing Arts Company brings a bit of African culture to Penn State.

President Christina Martínez said the word "nommo" translates loosely into the idea of a seed. NOMMO hopes to use this idea to plant an appreciation for black culture in Central Pennsylvania.

"It's just a creative way to say it," she said.

Creative is an understatement. NOMMO is not your typical dance group.

"Each dance has a different meaning of something that happened years ago in Africa," Martínez said.

Every part of the performance is essential in telling a story, she added.

The rhythm section and dancers unite as one to tell that story.

"Drums and rhythm have a conversation with the dancers," said head drummer Jeff Martin.

"When things are going well, it's a beautiful conversation," he added.

The performance is dramatic, yet focused.

The dancers' arms fly above their heads then sweep the ground while the sound of their bare feet pounding the hardwood



The group NOMMO performs its routine in the White Building.

floor is almost as distinct as the rhythm of the drums.

All motion is carried out with a near effortless power as the bright greens, reds, golds and purples of their wrap-around skirts flash brilliantly.

"When you are playing, it's like your ancestors are speaking through the drums," Martin said. "So you dance out of respect for them. That's why you give all your energy."

One of NOMMO's more popular dances, called Mendiani, is an upbeat dance.

Martínez said it represents a

young woman's initiation into a group. The young woman is accepted by how well she dances.

Nesha Christian-Hendrickson, former NOMMO president, danced with the group for four years before graduating last spring.

Often in the middle of a dance, she would yell out in what is known as an African call.

Christian-Hendrickson said such calls are used for inspiration and to encourage the dancers. No one can really teach you how to call. "Whatever you feel just comes out," she said.



Originally, all of the NOMMO members were of African-American descent, Christian-Hendrickson added, but now they have diversified to include anyone with a love for African dance and rhythm.

As a non-audition group, NOMMO welcomes new members.

Rehearsals are 6 to 8 p.m. Monday and Wednesday in 132 White Building and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday in 113 White Building.

"It is a family atmosphere," said Martínez. "Just come to a practice."

THE SCENE

Allen Street Grill, 100 W. College Ave., will feature Bill Filer and Magic Hat beer. Specials include \$1 Miller Lite drafts and happy hour from 10 p.m. to midnight with half-priced well liquor (231-4745).

Bar Bleu, 114 S. Garner St., will feature Karaoke with Jackie O. Specials include happy hour from 9 to 11 p.m. and \$5 Yuengling Lager pitchers until midnight (237-0374).

Café 210 West, 210 W. College Ave., will feature J.R. & Katie at 7 p.m. and Maxwell Strait at 10 p.m. Specials include \$2 10 oz. Captain and Cokes and \$5 32 oz. liquor pitchers from 11 a.m. to midnight, a Coors Light draft feature and happy hour starting at 10 p.m. (237-3449).

Crowbar, 420 E. College Ave., will feature Velveeta at 10:30 p.m. Specials include nickel well drinks and nickel drafts from 10 p.m. to midnight and \$3.95 Miller Lite pitchers from 8 p.m. to midnight (237-0426).

Lion's Den, 118 S. Garner St., will feature Renaissance Entertainment at 10 p.m. Specials include \$1 Miller High Life pitchers from 8 p.m. to close, \$1 iced teas from 10 p.m. to midnight, and \$1 Captain and Cola from 8 p.m. to midnight (237-5081).

The All American Rathskeller, 108 S. Pugh St., will feature Brian Lubrecht at 10:30 p.m. Specials include \$2 any flavor Bacardi and mixers and happy hour from 10 p.m. to midnight (237-3858).

The Arena, 1521 Martin St., will feature \$2 frozen margaritas until midnight and happy hour from 8 to 10 p.m. (237-8833).

The Darkhorse Tavern, 128 E. College Ave. will feature half-priced happies from 10 p.m. to midnight and \$3.75 Labatt Blue pitchers from 5 p.m. to midnight (237-0490).

The Gingerbread Man, 130 Hiester St., will feature Scott Mangene at 10:30 p.m. Specials include \$3 Vodka and Red Bulls, \$2.50 Michelob Light pitchers, \$4 Sarnac Lager, Michelob Ultra and Bud Light pitchers, \$2.75 Sam Adams and Sierra Nevada pints, \$2 Dr. McGillicuddy's Mentholmints, \$2.50 Cherry Busters and Smirnoff Cocktails, \$5.50 32 oz. Bacardi Hurricanes and happies from 10 p.m. to midnight (237-0361).

Zeno's, 100 W. College Ave., will feature Kid Bismark at 10 p.m. Specials include liquor deals 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., half-priced drafts from 10 p.m. to midnight and a Heineken special all day (237-2857).

To have an arts and entertainment event listed here, e-mail Arts Editor **Ann Doyle** at aed155@psu.edu two days in advance of the event.

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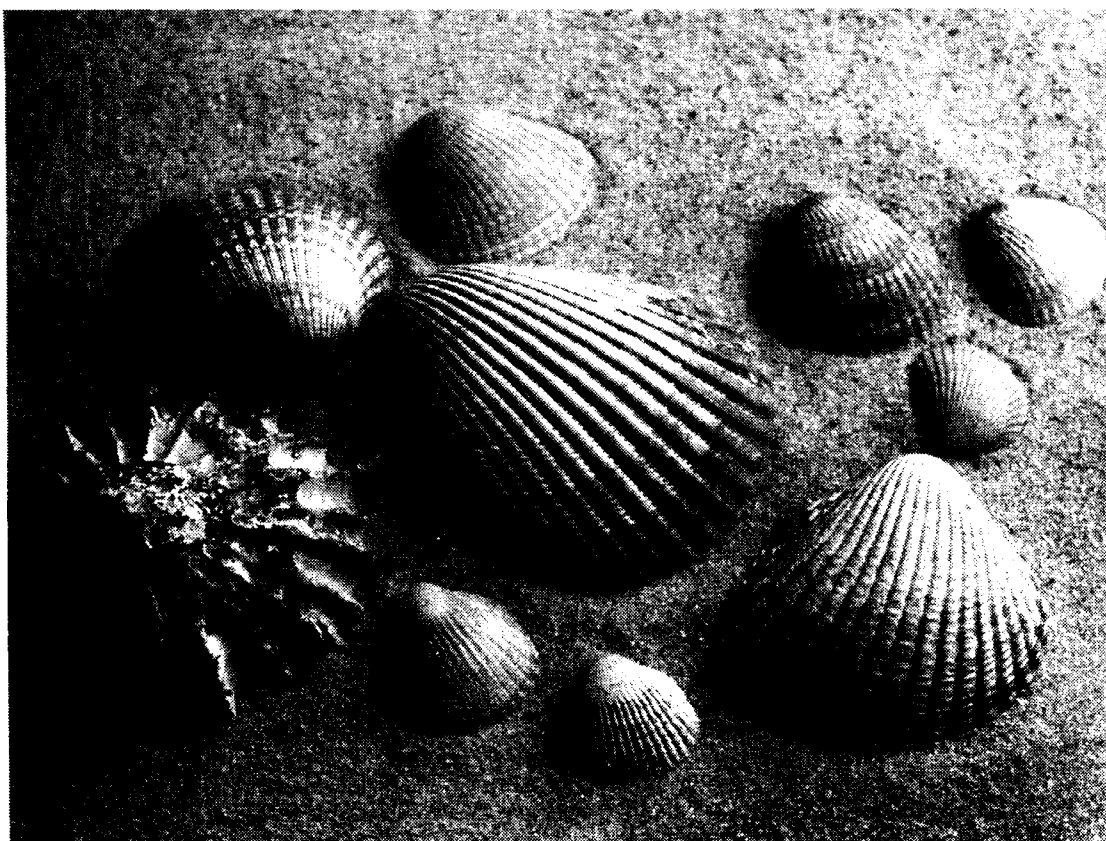


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