

NU performance groups take Manhattan on break

Boomshaka steals spotlight on 'TRL'; Titanic Players travels to Boston, NYU

April 04, 2003

By Eric Martin

Two Northwestern performance troupes took rhythm and laughter on the road during Spring Break.

Boomshaka, NU's percussion and dance ensemble, lit up television screens across the country appearing on MTV's "Total Request Live" in New York's Time Square on March 26, while improv comedy group Titanic Players toured the Northeast.

"The crowd loved it," said Samir Mayekar, a Weinberg freshman and Boomshaka member, on his group's performance in New York. "It was something totally out of the ordinary for 'TRL.' Instead of teeny-bopper screaming, it was us playing our stuff."

When members of Boomshaka arrived at the MTV studio in Time Square, there already was a long line to get in for the afternoon show's taping, they said. The group set up their equipment on the street in an area blocked off by the New York Police Department. Though several police officers told Boomshaka that MTV producers might ask them to leave, a quick performance for the officers persuaded them to allow the group to stay.

"The police really got into it," Mayekar said. "They took our information and said they would try to send us all NYPD T-shirts."

Halfway through the show's music video countdown, Mayekar said, MTV host Hillarie came down to the street. Cameras focused on the group for 30 seconds as drummers banged on buckets and trash cans in front of a the crowd.

After the performance, Hillarie interviewed Communication junior Lauren Nagel-Werd, one of the group's directors.

"We go around to different cities trying to bring rhythm everywhere we go," Nagel-Werd said she told the host in the interview, shouting over the fans who were lined up along the metal police barricade.

Boomshaka's 'TRL' performance was one of several stops in New York as part of their Spring Break tour, designed to test pieces for their upcoming spring show. Boomshaka also performed at an elementary school and a high school.

While the first two days in New York were filled with rehearsals, group members said they had a chance to relax later on. Members visited Ground Zero, toured the Museum of Modern Art and watched Broadway shows.

After performing in Evanston at Alternative Spring Break's kickoff event on March 21, members of Titanic Players drove to Boston to perform at the comedy club Improv Boston before moving on to shows in the Big Apple.

"We ran all over New York," said Sarah Graber, a Communication sophomore and group member. "We were either driving, sleeping, performing or hanging out with each other."

Titanic Players performed with a comedy troupe from New York University and entertained audiences at the former high schools of group members Chris Britt and Matt Sax.

At Britt's alma mater, Arlington High School in Arlington, Mass., Titanic Players had the chance to perform with the school's senior acting classes and involved the high school students in various skits.

"It was exciting going back because they were all really supportive of us," said Britt, a Communication freshman. "The kids wanted to have a good time. Almost the whole school came to see us perform."

Graber said the tour was a bonding experience for members of Titanic Players.

"We are so close now," she said. "It was complete paradise -- the best way to spend a vacation."