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Goucher welcomes Kenyan ensemble

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Jabali Afrika, the Kenyan music and dance trio, performed at Goucher College on Monday, November 3. The group consists of Joseck Asikoye, Victor Elolo, Justo Otongo, Evans Chagala and Robert Owino.



Media Credit: Sonya Sofranko

Jabali Afrika originates from East Africa's Kenya. The band's original sound is attributed to its own unique mixture and special fusion of African rhythms.

Jabali Afrika's members are not only composers, singers, instrumentalists, and percussionists but they also draw upon their shared history from the Kenya National Theatre Dance Troupe to include dance, choreography, and traditional East African tribal costumes in their musical presentation.

The trio played songs from all of their four albums including "Sweetness," "The Bride," "100 Parracent," and "Aoko." The arrangement of percussion instruments such as African drums, bongos, and drum set were used in the performance. Some of the troupe was dressed in traditional African garb.

Audience members were encouraged to participate and Otongo and Elolo were energetic in encouraging audience members onto the stage. They danced in the crowd and beckoned audience members to join in the journey they were taking through the world.

Jabali Afrika was engaging and had many ways of keeping the audience on the edge of their seats. Elolo, who mainly played the bongos and African drums, put his elbow on one of the drums and continued to play with his other hand, all the while keeping up with the rapidly increasing tempo.

"100 Parracent," one of the songs they performed, conveyed a heartfelt message. "Appreciate the one you love," Asikoye said. Jabali Afrika's enthusiasm really inspired audience participation.

The event was sponsored by the Office of Student Engagement. Lamar Hylton, Assistant Director of Programming at the Office of Student Engagement, said Jabali Afrika was a good fit for Goucher.

"I am trying to create a more well-rounded program," Hylton said. He said that in previous years most events did not target the entire student body.

"I am hoping to create a program that has different facets under one umbrella," said Hylton, who believes that the event brought a multicultural audience.

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