

80 HOURS

The weekend in arts & entertainment

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LAPTOP AS MUSIC

Members of one UI musical ensemble have traded reeds for screens, strings for software, and piano keys for computer keys.

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Tin cans, glass containers, and a cardboard box provide targets for University of Iowa percussion graduate student Andrew Thierauf's mallets. As microphones amplify the various sounds, he directs a room full of composers tapping on laptops.

"To begin, everyone the press space bar," Thierauf said. "Next, press 1 all together."

With instructions that could easily be mistaken for cheat codes to a computer game, this unconventional ensemble commences a musical arrangement. The UI Laptop Orchestra will perform its

original piece at 8 p.m. Friday in the University Capitol Center Recital Hall.

Laptop Orchestra research assistant and event host Jason Palamara said the orchestra rehearses while sitting in a half-moon shape similar to other ensembles. The only difference is its musical instrument of choice is a laptop.

"There are two elements to the process," Palamara said. "There's the playing music part, and then there's building some kind of technology or software that will play the music."

From electronic music of the 20th century to the more recent explosion of techno music on the radio, today's society is familiar with the incorporation of laptops and technology in the creation of

songs. Director of the UI School of Music Dave Gier said technology has positively affected the ease with which people can access and share music, making the laptop a great tool for musicians.

And though a small percentage of composers have specialized in electronic music since computers were able to spit out audio signals, they rarely dabble in classical genres.

"There's been sort of a separation between the traditional composer and the electronic composer," said David Gomper, the orchestra's director. "We're trying to bridge that gap."

With the variety of music a laptop

SEE LAPTOPS, 38

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