

# **International Journal of Carnival Arts**



**Volume 1 - May 2020**

## Dedication

*This inaugural volume of the IJCA is dedicated to some of the carnival pioneers who directly or indirectly have had a huge impact on the initiation of this journal:*

The late: **Russell Henderson** (UK)  
**Christopher Innes** (Canada)  
**Ashton Sylvester Moore** - 'Mighty Tiger' (UK)  
**Jit Sukha Samaroo** (Trinidad & Tobago)

*and visionaries who continue to actively push the boundaries of carnival arts:*

**Sterling Betancourt** (UK)  
**John Cowley** (UK)  
**Cyril Khamai** (UK)  
**Peter Minshall** (Trinidad & Tobago)  
**Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed** (Trinidad & Tobago)  
**Adela Ruth Tompsett** (UK)  
**Anthony Williams** (Trinidad & Tobago)

**Scope of the ‘International Journal of Carnival Arts: Steelpan, Calypso and Mas’ (IJCA)**

<https://www.steelpanconference.com/> (see Journal)

The ‘International Journal of Carnival Arts; Steelpan, Calypso and Mas’ (IJCA) provides an expansive platform on which to report work on steelpan, calypso and related carnival arts. Authors are responsible for the content of their work and ownership of their material and for seeking permission to report the work from their own establishments. Confirmation of approval for the sharing of material should be submitted with the paper. IJCA conforms to high ethical standards, and published papers will have been subjected to peer-review.

IJCA aims to provide clear, invigorating and comprehensible accounts of early and contemporary research in steelpan, calypso and carnival arts. It unifies aspects of steelpan activities within the carnival arts and welcomes both academic research and the work of grass roots practitioners of the pan yards, calypso tents and mas camps. Its coverage spans both more abstract research as well as applied fields, and welcomes contributions from related areas including metallurgy, acoustics, new technologies and software, databases, steelpan forms, advances and performances, arts and crafts, movement, costumes, archiving, social commentary, music, history and development of calypso, extempo, soca and related genres and pioneering work of artists (biographical or otherwise), and the development of carnival arts globally. The journal strives to strengthen connections between research and practice, and in so doing enhancing professional development and improving practice within the field of carnival arts.

Material in the journal remains the property of authors. Papers in the journal are open access for group sharing and interaction, and do not reflect the editors’ views or ownership.

**Why publish in the IJCA?**

- Much of the history of carnival arts – steelpan, calypso and mas – are oral. Statements are often based on personal views and the memory of individuals. This journal provides a forum for diverse views to be expressed and, in doing so, consensus may eventually be derived that reflects a more accurate history of carnival arts.
- Academic papers in carnival arts are published in highly specific and inaccessible journals that are outside the realm of the general carnivalist. We anticipate that this journal will allow authors of such papers to adapt some of their work for the more general audience of this journal where grassroots enthusiasts can learn and appreciate the broader aspects of this field.
- Postgraduate students are doing tremendous work on various facets of carnival arts and will continue to publish their work in well-established recognised journals for their own career development. We envisage this journal could be used by such students to draw attention to their valued work and to make it more accessible to the general public.
- The grassroots workers of steelpan, calypso and mas who drive the development of these artforms are often excluded from direct publication of their valuable work. This journal provides an informal, cost-free means to get their work aired and brought to the forefront of enthusiasts.
- Some of the legends of carnival arts – for example steelpan pioneers such as Anthony Williams, Sterling Betancourt, Cyril Khamai, Lennox ‘Bobby’ Mohammed, Alfred Totesaut and Peter Joseph – are still active and possess a wealth of information. Such individuals contributed to key stages in development of steelpan. They may be interviewed in pieces for this journal, and their incisive contributions thus brought to readers.
- We are encouraging all to write and capture a holistic view of carnival arts and not to feel intimidated by language and grammar - papers will be edited with their consent and brought to the attention of a global audience.
- Initially the journal will be published biannually – first and last quarter of the year but will be responsive to change.

## Types of Papers:

- i) Original Full-length papers - usually 3,000 - 7,000 words.
- ii) Short Communications - up to 3,000 words.
- iii) Research papers e.g. carnival arts studies, hypotheses and analyses.
- iv) Reviews - e.g. of relevant books, exhibitions, films etc.
- v) Request for an opinion - an author who wishes to share views on a subject.
- vi) Letter to the Editor – queries or comments on published papers.
- vii) Historical - e.g. carnival in rural a town or on a pioneer of carnival arts.
- viii) Social anthropological studies on carnival.
- ix) Personal experiences of aspects of carnival.
- x) Reports of carnival archives.
- xi) Technological developments e.g. in sound, acoustics, new material for mas etc.
- xii) Erratum – From Volume 2, IJCA will include a designated Erratum page(s) to correct any errors of the previous volume. However, this represents an important part of the feedback, and a mechanism for the informed criticism of papers in IJCA. Because much of the history of carnival arts relies on the memory of individuals, information may be skewed towards the interest and exposure of an individual. By readers submitting comments and corrections on controversial topics, eventually consensus may help to point to the most likely scenario.

## Requirements for Submission

### Cover Letter:

All submissions should be accompanied by a covering letter briefly stating the significance of the work and agreement of author/s and institute for publication. Please also submit the names and affiliations of all authors and the contact details of the corresponding author.

**Preparation of a paper for submission** (see detailed guidelines  
<https://www.steelpanconference.com/> - see Journal.)

Most of the process outlined below is standard procedure but is provided to try to maintain a level of uniformity of papers within the journal. The Editors have opted to use a modified 'Elsevier -Harvard (with titles) Style'. Briefly this follows the format below:

**Title:** A succinct representation of the paper. Use font 14, Times New Roman. Capitalise each word. Centralised, and keep to about 40 words without abbreviation.

### Author Name<sup>1</sup> – Size 14 – Bold

<sup>1</sup>Institute/Company/Band's Name and Address - Times New Roman – size 12  
 Add- telephone, email address of the corresponding author.

### Abstract:

Should be informative and self-explanatory, briefly present the topic, state the scope of the paper, indicate significant results and point out major findings and conclusions. The abstract should summarise the manuscript content in less than 500 words.

**Key Words:** Size 11. This follows the Abstract and consists of a list of Key Words (4-10) and any abbreviations used in the text.



**Text: A) Research Papers (B) Reviews and other articles:****A) Research Papers - Introduction:**

This should set the tone of the paper by providing a clear statement of the study, the relevant literature on the subject, and the proposed approach or solution. The introduction should be general enough to attract a reader's attention from a broad range of carnival arts disciplines and should lead directly into the aims of the work.

**Description of the work:**

This section should provide a complete overview of the design of the study. Detailed descriptions of materials or participants, comparisons, interventions and types of analysis should be mentioned. However, only new procedures need to be described in detail. Previously published procedures should be cited, and important modifications of published procedures should be mentioned briefly.

**Findings and Discussion:**

This section should provide evidence that supports the conclusion of the study, while speculation and detailed interpretation of data should be included in the Discussion.

**Acknowledgements:**

Acknowledgment of people, grant details, funds, etc may be included under this section.

**B) Reviews and other articles:**

The Abstract and Introduction should follow the above guidelines, however, for the remainder of the paper, authors may devise their own headings and subheadings to follow a chronological order of work presented.

**References in text:**

Published or accepted manuscripts should be included in the reference list. Meetings, abstracts, conference talks, or papers that have been submitted but not yet accepted may be cited as 'submitted for publication', 'personal communication (abbreviate as 'per. com.') or 'Proceedings of the meeting'. References in the text should be listed by the first author's surname followed by the year of publication, for example, Brown,1990 or if several authors as Brown *et al.*,1990. Multiple citations should be separated by semicolons e.g. Brown, 1990; O'Connor, 1995.

The following are examples for the reference list/bibliography to be included at the end of the paper:

**Book reference:**

Hocking, C., 2005. The story of the Bridgewater Carnival from 1880 to 2005. The Bridgewater Educational Press; Somerset.

**Article reference:**

Ramtahal, Kumaree, Kumar, Marilyn, 2016. Documenting and Archiving the Ramleela Legacy in Trinidad: Practice and Prospects. Caribbean Library Journal, 4, 41-61.

**Conference:** e.g. Shah H.N., 2016. The Fusion of Steelpan with other Art Forms in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Proceedings of the 6th International Biennial Steelpan Conference. London, 7- 9th October 2016.

**Tables:**

These should be designed as simple as possible. Each table should be numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals and supplied with a heading and a legend at the top of the table. Tables should be self-explanatory without reference to the text. The same data should not be presented in both table and graph form or repeated in the text.

**Figures:**

The preferred file formats for photographic images are TIFF and JPEG.

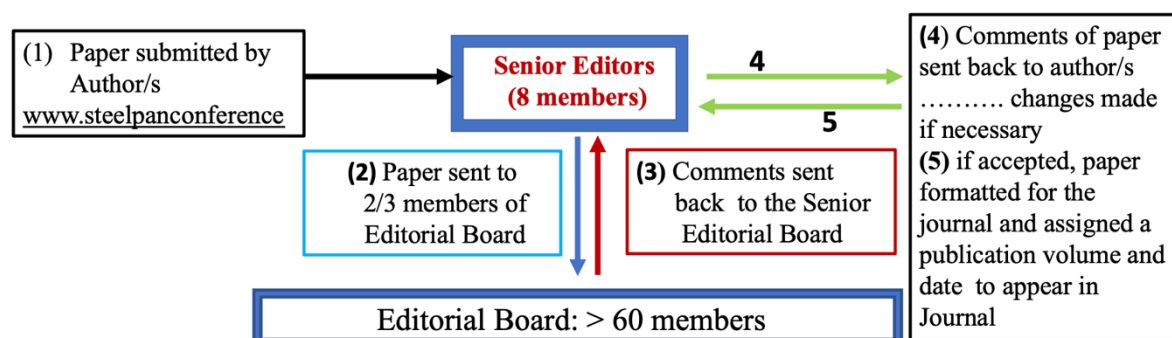
Begin each legend with a title (below the figure) and include sufficient description so that the figure is understandable without reading the text of the manuscript. Information given in legends should not be repeated in the text. Label figures sequentially (e.g. Figure 1: ..... ) and cite in the text as Fig. 1.

**Process after Submission for Publication – Reviewers, Report & Proofs.**

The figure below illustrates the process that takes place once a manuscript (MS) is submitted to IJCA. It shows the interaction between the Senior Editorial Board and the Editorial Board. Once the review process has been completed, a member of the Senior Editorial Board will send a letter to the corresponding author informing them of the outcome, and if required, detailing suggestions to improve the MS. The senior board member will then liaise with the author to finalise the MS and prepare it for publication.

**Stages in Processing a Paper**

(communications by email)



Papers may also be submitted directly by email: IJCarnivalArts@gmail.com

**Disclaimer:** The content on this site, including reports, analyses, images and opinions are contributions by the named authors and are based on sources they personally acknowledge and cite that are believed to be accurate and reliable when submitted. The editors of the *International Journal of Carnival Arts* make no representation of warranty of any kind as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided and accepts no liability for any damage or loss resulting from errors, inaccuracies or omissions affecting any part of the content. Articles may be reprinted on condition that acknowledgement of the original source is made.

## CONTENTS

### Editorial

***“Pan -The Story of the Steel Band” a Monumentally Concise Paragon by ‘Will’ Austin Simmonds on the Early History of this Remarkable Instrument. .... 1- 7***

1. ***Lost Memories; The World’s Largest Digitised Video Archive of Caribbean Culture and Society.*** Christopher Laird, Banyan Ltd. Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago ..... 8-19
2. ***Youth Restiveness and Empowerment in Nigeria: Role of the Steelpan.*** Bowie Sonnie Bowie, Africa-Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan Development Company Ltd. and Resolution Resource Center, Nigeria. .... 20-29
3. ***The Memory of TASPO Lives On; Lineages of this Legendary Steelband Team up to Play on the Streets of Trinidad for Carnival 2018. Where are the Steelbands? What is their Future in Carnival?*** Laila M.N. Shah and Haroun N. Shah, Nostalgia and Mangrove Steelbands, Middlesex University, London and King’s College London, UK. .... 30 - 42
4. ***Cultural Pluralism in the Steelband Movement of Trinidad and Tobago; East Indian Involvement in Steelband.*** Nestor Sullivan, Pamberi Steel Orchestra, Former Vice President, Pan Trinbago, Trinidad & Tobago. .... 43 - 62
5. ***Culture, Business and National Identity Politics - The Effect of Cultural Management Policies and Practices on the Creative Ecology of Trinidad and Tobago*** Suzanne Burke, Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad. .... 63 - 76
6. ***A Photo/Audio Journalistic Snapshot of Three Decades of London’s Notting Hill Carnival.*** Omar El-Houni, Notting Hill Carnival Infocus, London, UK. .... 77- 91
7. ***Sounds Like Home: Music, Indigeneity, and Identity in Diasporic Caribbean Carnival.*** Andrew Martin, Inver Hills College, USA. .... 92 - 101

**Senior Editorial Board:**

Dawn K. Batson, PhD, University of Miami, Professor ret. Florida Memorial University, International Cultural Consultant, Arranger, Educator, Lecturer in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Culture as an Economic Force. Email: [dkbat@bellsouth.net](mailto:dkbat@bellsouth.net)

Suzanne Burke, PhD, Essex University, UK., M.A. Cum Laude - ISS, Netherlands, B.A. York University, Ca. Lecturer in Cultural Studies, Carnival arts, Governance, Strategic Planning, Policy Analysis, Cultural Industry Development. Email: [imanitt.suzanne@gmail.com](mailto:imanitt.suzanne@gmail.com)

Kim Johnson, PhD, University of West Indies, Historian, Journalist, Researcher, foremost Steelpan Historian in Trinidad & Tobago and Carnival Arts. Email: [eshu55@gmail.com](mailto:eshu55@gmail.com)

Alexander Loewenthal, BA (CNAA), PGCE University of London, (aka Alexander D Great). Classically trained musician. Calypsonian (Association of Calypsonians and Soca Artists UK). Lecturer, Educator. Email: [adgreat7@gmail.com](mailto:adgreat7@gmail.com)

Robbie Joseph, CISMP, Founder/ Editor of *Pan Podium*, Chair; UK Steelpan Tuners Guild, Executive; British Association of Steelbands. Steelpan Journalist and Analyst. Email: [robbie@panpodium.com](mailto:robbie@panpodium.com)

Andrew R. Martin, PhD, Professor of Music, Inver Hills College. Journalist, Researcher, Author. Prolific writer on Carnival Arts, frequently in the Trinidad Guardian. Email: [AMartin@inverhills.edu](mailto:AMartin@inverhills.edu)

Haroun N. Shah, PhD, University of London. Current, Middlesex University, London, Notting Hill Carnival Board, Steelpan and Carnival Arts, Nostalgia Steelband. Email: [harounnshah@gmail.com](mailto:harounnshah@gmail.com)

Stephen Spark, MA, University of Westminster, Consulting Editor, *SocaNews*, Freelance Journalist, Publishing, Calypso, History and Current Events. Email: [tafton.editorial@gmail.com](mailto:tafton.editorial@gmail.com)

**Editorial Board:**

Camille Y.T. **Allan**, BA, MA., University of Manchester. Pannist, Tutored by Sterling Betancourt as a youth. Played with Nostalgia in the UK and abroad. Co-organiser, first steelpan conference 2006. Play piano, trumpet and sing. Lived in Peru for 11 years - keen interest in Caribbean and Latin American music.

Nikoli Adrian **Attai**, PhD, Provost's Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto, Women and Gender Studies Institute. Women and Gender Studies. Queer Carnival Studies: transgression, sexuality, gender performance, queer tourism, carnival tourism, J'Ouvert, diaspora carnivals.

Darrell **Baksh**, PhD Candidate (ABD), The University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Trinidad. Caribbean popular culture: Indo-Caribbean popular culture, Caribbean carnival cultures, popular music, identity politics, feminisms.

Zuleika **Beaven**, PhD. Lecturer, Middlesex University London. Arts Management: governance, organisational behaviour, enterprise & start-up, event management and carnival arts.

Brigitte **Bogar**, PhD. York University, Canada. Music, theatre and street theatre.

Ian **Boggan**, MA, Dipl. Management, Assessor and QA qualified., Retired police officer, Adult trainer (DTTLLS). Pannist, arranger, musician, pan management, Lead - Spangle steel band (Norfolk). Workshops (Spangle Pans). Promotion of pans in Norfolk.

Bowie Sonnie **Bowei**, PhD. VistaPan Africa; International Percussion Federation; International Arts Games Committee. Steelpan; African history, development, dissemination, pioneers, carnival in Nigeria.

Glenn **Charles**, Director, UK Trini & Friends. Pannist, carnival arts promoter, teacher, event organiser, performer and youth leader.

Violet **Cuffy**, PhD, MSc, AICB, Bed. University of Bedfordshire. Sustainable tourism management, carnival arts, educator and community events. arts.

Tola **Dabiri**, PhD. Managing Director, UK Centre for Carnival Arts. Intangible cultural heritage of carnival, orality, traditional mas and skills. Organisation of Luton Carnival.

Deborah **de Gazon**, PgDip, MA, PhD (ongoing). (Former Creative Director, Notting Hill Carnival) at Creative Learning Circuit Ltd. Work widely across the field of carnival arts; creative consultancy, researcher, lecturer, management, community worker

Erika Melek **Delgado**, PhD. Leverhulme Fellow - King's College London, Associate Director of Freedom Narratives Project. Brazilian Carnival, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Migration and Expressive Cultures.

Debra **Eden**, B.Ed. Special Needs Teacher. Pannist, arranger, steelpan composer, tutor, soloist, mentor, event organiser, calypso composer and performer.

Marl'ene **Edwin**, PhD. Centre for Caribbean and Diaspora Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London. Caribbean women writers, carnival, history, literature, linguistics.

Francois **Evans**, PhD. Lecturer, Middlesex University London. Steelpan: composing and arranging for ensemble, contemporary composition for steel pan ensemble, stylistic fusion/s, steel pan music and electronics.

Candice **Falconer**, MChem, B.Ed. Music and Science Teacher. Pannist, youth steelpan tutor, project leader, fundraiser, community worker, STEM Teacher.

Nicole **Ferdinand**, PhD. Senior Lecturer, Bournemouth University. Lecturer in carnival arts, events manager, researcher, consultant, International marketing, enterprise, carnival business.

Kela N. **Francis**, BA, PhD. Assistant Professor. Lecturer in Caribbean History, calypso composition, academic writing and Communication. University of Trinidad and Tobago. masquerade, calypso, secularized ritual. Research interests include African diaspora Literature, music, festivals; popular culture; cultural studies; and human spirituality.

Debi **Gardener**, Executive Officer of the British Association of Steelbands. Notting Hill Carnival Board Director. Steel pan: performance. business of managing a steel band. Organising steel pan and steel band events. Carnival arts.

Roger **Gibbs**. Shak Shak. Calypso: music history, Caribbean drumming & rhythms, fusion/s, calypso jazz, Caribbean traditional and vintage music. Non-pan instrumental. Choral/a cappella: Calypso & Soca, popular & traditional Caribbean.

Shareen **Gray**, BA (Hons) Business Publishing. Director Steel Pan Trust Business Owner Steel Pan Agency. Provides steelpan performances and workshops for all age and abilities, specialises in teaching people with special needs and learning difficulties. Tutor, training accessories and qualifications.

Malika Rachelle **Green**. BA Music. Director, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. Pannist, arranger, tutor, composer, community music engagement and promoter. Currently based in Trinidad.

Emina **Hadzifejzovic**, BSc, PhD. Research Scientist University of Oxford. Long serving member of Nostalgia Steelband, UK. Avid steelpan practitioner and educator. Ardent supporter of steelpan performances at carnivals, charitable fundraising events, public spaces including festivals, workshops and conferences.

Rachel **Hayward**, MA. (Music Performance). City University, London. PhD. Author of several books. Leader, Euphoria Steelband. History of steel band, pan-round-neck, worldwide dissemination of pan, repertoire development and arrangement/transcription for pan, pan solos, pan with "conventional" instruments.

Jeffery **Hinds**, Calypso sobriquet; De Admiral. Professional Boxing Referee. Justice of the Peace. Calypso, composer, monarch, pannists, community worker, event organiser.

Nesreen N. **Hussein**, BFA, MRes, PhD, AFHEA. Lecturer in Contemporary Theatre, Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, Middlesex University. Music, theatre and street theatre. The socio-political history of carnival arts and steelpan, legacy of carnival arts and steelpan as a form of resistance, art and activism, connections with global cultures, diversity, multiculturalism, colonialism, relation to the history of empire.

Kal **Juman**, Toronto Caribbean Carnival, Digital Marketing, Sponsorships, Partnerships and New Business Opportunities. Carnival Arts, innovative methods of modernising Toronto Caribbean Carnival including management corporation sponsorship and partnerships.

Linett **Kamala**, BA MA NPOH. Associate Lecturer, University of the Arts London, BA Performance: Design and Practice team. Lin Kam Art Ltd. Director, Notting Hill Carnival. Artist, educator, facilitator, promoter, carnival, mas and sound systems. Use of art to inspire, heal, enrich and transform lives - 'freestyle calligraffiti'.

Christopher **Laird**, D.Litt, UWI. Teacher, Published 'Kairi', an arts journal, ran a theatre in TT and cofounded a Caribbean TV station. Produced >300 documentaries and dramas and helped establish the world's largest video collection of Caribbean culture.

Anna **Lawrence**, BA, MPhil - PhD candidate, University of Cambridge. Steelpan and mas: history, geography, culture, Caribbean diaspora, cultural appropriation, politics of music and race, multiculturalism, (post)colonial Britain.

Frauke **Lühning**. BA Ethnomusicology, University of Amsterdam. School of Arts as ballet accompanist. Founder, teacher and musical director of Bijlmer Steelband, Amsterdam. Conservatory degrees in church organ and World music, Latin American and Caribbean music, piano. Steelband composition, arranging, transcription. History and development of steelpan and steelband music. Methodology for steelpan lessons.

Ray **Mahabir**, Artistic Director, Sunshine International Arts. Hands on artistic director, designer, promoter.

Mia **Maugé**, Notting Hill Carnival Ltd, Head, Marketing; PR and Communications. Notting Hill Carnival art forms, marketing; prompter, producer, communications.

Lionel **McCalman**. PhD. ret. University of East London. Nostalgia Steelband. Pannist, arranger, author-steelpan history, youth steelpan tutor, fundraiser, community worker.

Monique **McIntosh**, BFA. Performing Arts. (Major in Dance). UTT. Event Planner. George Washington University. CEO/ Director of Unique Monique's Events. Trinidad and Tobago. History, promotion and teaching of Caribbean dance and its numerous genres such as limbo, Joropo, Bongo, and carnival characters sailor, baby doll and dame Lorraine etc.

Patrick **McKay**, Coordinator, St Michael Youth Project. Pannist, arranger, youth steelpan tutor, project leader, fundraiser, community worker

Hamish **Mohammed**, PhD, MPH. Avid Steelpan, Soca and Carnival arts follower. Close family involvement with Exodus Steelband.

Nicole Richelle **Moore**, BA, MA PhD. University lecturer, freelance journalist. Former manager of the London Calypso Tent. Calypso and related genres, history, writer, educator, tutor and events manager.

Johanne **Narayn**, PGCE, Dip. Graphic Design, Dip. Fine Arts, Art and Literacy Lecturer. CE/Owner, Flamingo Arts Emporium; Arts & Crafts. Fine artist: exhibiting predominantly paintings inspired by the Flora and Fauna of Trinidad, especially Hummingbirds. Combined poetry, song and arts.

Aneesa **Oumarally**, Lawyer, Public Policy and Administration, MBA, University of Toronto. CEO, Festival Management Committee. Board of Directors, Toronto Caribbean Carnival. History of Carnival Art culture; Growth and change of the culture over time. Vibrant member of the Caribbean Community, carnival arts, Toronto Caribbean Carnival performer, organiser, administration and promoter.

'H' **Patten**, PhD. Artistic Director Koromanti Arts, choreographer, dancer, storyteller, visual artist, filmmaker. Lecturer in African Peoples' dance. Caribbean arts and culture, popular culture. carnival staging, Caribbean History and genealogy, carnival production, dance, music and choreography.

Carol **Phillips**, Dip. Urban Community Studies, University of London (Birkbeck). Windrush Generation, history of steelpan and calypso, contemporary black music. Contemporary Black Theatre and Drama and African/Caribbean Studies.

Jimi **Philip**. NIHERST- Science of Steelpan. Pannist, numerous awards, steelpan tutor at schools and universities, musician, steelpan innovator, performer, promoter and tuner.

Jeannine **Remy**, BA, MA, PhD. Senior Lecturer in Music. Department of Creative and Festival Arts, UWI, Trinidad. Pannist, Educator, Arranger, Writer, Steelpan historian. Percussionist and Tutor.

Lynda **Rosenior-Patten**, MA. CEO Maestro7 Creative Management Consultancy. Board Member, Ebony Steel band, Former Managing Director Notting Hill Carnival Pioneers Community Festival. Origins and Genealogy of Carnival and its links to West African Mas traditions, Notting Hill Carnival, sound systems, strategic management and leadership training programmes, gender and equality issues.

Katie **Segal**, Post grad. Psychotherapy. Lifelong interest/performer in Trinidad & Tobago and Notting Hill carnivals. Member; Notting Hill Carnival Advisory Council. Sub-editor of Soca News. Mas: roots, history, culture, tradition, and present day, including J'Ouvert/dutty mas. Broad interest in carnival music including Soca, chutney, zouk, bouillon, Dennery segment.

Laila M.N. **Shah**, BSc, King's College, University of London. Youth Rep., Windrush Generation and Carnival Village Trust. Pannist, tutor, youth representative carnival arts, educator, event organiser, steelpan fundraiser.

Louise C.F. **Shah**, BA, University of Southampton, MA, SOAS, University of London. Pannist, Tutored by Sterling Betancourt as a youth. From aged 14, played with Nostalgia in the UK and abroad. Co-organiser and author - third steelpan conference 2010. Play piano, guitar and sing. Avid follower and performer of steelpan and carnival.

Dmitri **Subotsky**, MA FIA Actuary, Guy Carpenter, London. Collecting and compiling information on calypso, Soca and steel band recordings. Compiled a database of such recordings from the Caribbean, USA, Canada, the UK and elsewhere, with coverage particularly strong in the vinyl era.

Nestor **Sullivan**, B.Ed, Founder/Manager Pamberi Steel Orchestra. V.P. Pan Trinbago. Operations. Manager, T & T National Steel Orchestra. Pannist, educator, promoter and carnival arts. T & T Pan in Schools leader.

Leon Foster **Thomas**, MA, Florida Memorial University and Florida International University. Steelpan-Jazz, percussionist, steelpan drill mater, composer, arranger.

Vernon Shabaka **Thompson**, MA, PhD. Former CEO, London Notting Hill Carnival, co-founder Calypso Tent. Carnival organiser, band leader, carnival event manager and lecturer. Theatre, education and community development. Carnival specialist. Strategic planning, fundraising and costume production.

Ruth **Tompsett**, PhD. Lecturer, writer and academic. Founder of Carnival Studies at Middlesex University London. Co-directed, co-edited work for the renowned 'Midnight Robbers: The Artists of Notting Hill Carnival' global exhibition. History of carnival arts and culture, archiving and instituting exhibitions in the field. Educator and creating community awareness of carnival arts. Fervent devotee of calypso, mas and pan.

Christine **Warrington**, MA. Royal College of Art. Fine Art/Printmaking and Sculpture. ACAVA Barham Park Studios, London. Freelance artist, visual art as a critique in socio-politics. Carnival history, mas, steelpan, calypso related genres of the Caribbean.

Rebecca **Watson**, PhD. Reader, Leeds Beckett University. Editorial Board of the Journal Leisure Sciences. Dance, Gender, Equality, intersectionality public leisure space, popular music. Miscegenation.

Jenny **Webb**, BSc. Organiser Pan Jam. Pannist, performer, promoter, tutor, arranger, pan development, globalisation, education. steelpan history and carnival arts.

Allyson **Williams**, MBE, NHS long service. Co-founder of mas band Genesis (1980). Interim Chair, Mas Arena. Notting Hill Carnival Board member. Street theatre. Mas camp administration, mas design, costume making, mas and carnival history, teacher and educator.

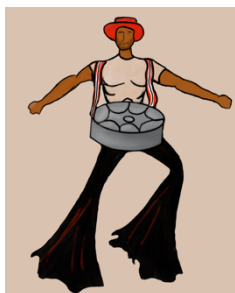
Nigel **Williams**, PhD. Senior Lecturer, Portsmouth Business School, University of Portsmouth. Festival management and technology, impact analysis in tourism and festivals, e.g. evaluating Notting Hill Carnival using social media platforms. Development of analytical tools such as FestIM and A.I.

Salah **Wilson**, PhD, Lecturer/Performer, York University, Toronto, Canada. Steelpan development/ curriculum development, composer/ arranger of all types of steelpan ensembles/ all genre of music/ Ideas on major pan promotional programs/author of steelpan textbooks.

Ansel **Wong**, JP, BA (Hons), Dip.Ed., MEd., FRSA. Carnival Arts as practitioner, artist, band leader and governance. Educator and Race Relation Advisor. Founder of Elimu Mas Band. Managing editor at multicultural publisher, Hansib Publications.

Natasha **Young**, MA, BA. Teacher of Art and Design, North London Collegiate School, Edgware. Steelpan, calypso and Carnival Arts in general.





## Editorial

### **“Pan -The Story of the Steel Band” a Monumentally Concise Paragon by ‘Will’ Austin Simmonds on the Early History of this Remarkable Instrument.**

#### Abstract

‘Pan -The Story of the Steel Band’ published in 1959 by ‘Will’ Austin Simmonds for his friend Raphael “Boy Blue” Samuel, is a deceptively modest booklet of only 15 half-pages. It was produced for the ‘Pan-in-Cement’ sculpture exhibition but omits any reference to sculpture, instead tracing out the early history of pan in a concise yet informative manner, earning it a place in UNESCO’s cultural heritage archive of Trinidad and Tobago.

The booklet has drawn huge support for the credit given to Trinidad’s very diverse communities during the 1940-50s when the steelpan began to evolve from the humble beginnings of assorted tin cans to biscuit tins and then oil drums. The layout of this booklet bears testimony to Simmonds’ broad acknowledgement of the plural society in which steelpan evolved and follows the headings: (1) Shango, (2) The East Indians (3) Carnival (4) Drums from India (5) Bamboo to Pan (6) The Tune Emerges (7) Band Wars (8) “Ellie” Manette (9) The Instruments Concerto in Pan (10) The Chinese Influence (11) A New Scale (12) Recognition.

Having been produced five years before Panorama began in 1963, the booklet is free of pressure to credit specific elements leaving it pristine and politically innocuous. It allows a non-biased expansive coverage of the many contributing communities and individuals who helped shaped the story of the steelpan. This was in contrast to later published books such as “*Steelband: a history; the Winston “Spree” Simon story*” Jones (1975), in which the focus narrows considerably to specific individuals

#### Three Copies of the Booklet

The first draft of Simmonds’ booklet was printed in 1958 but copies are unobtainable from its publisher or printers. A mere handful of copies appear to exist around the globe and held by at least six libraries (see Library). One such copy was handed to Dr Jeannine Remy in 2004 during the World Steelband Music Festival in Trinidad. Dr Remy made her copy available to “The Steelbands of Trinidad and Tobago” impressive website in which the following is stated “*www.seetobago.org wishes to thank Dr Jeannine Remy for the loan of her*

Library	
1.	<a href="#">The British Library, St. Pancras</a> London, NW1 2DB United Kingdom
2.	<a href="#">University of London Senate House Library</a> London, WC1E 7HU United Kingdom
3.	<a href="#">Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden</a> Leiden University Library Leiden, 2311 BG Netherlands
4.	<a href="#">Bibliothèque universitaire</a> BESANCON-BU Lettres Besançon, 25001 France
5.	<a href="#">HathiTrust Digital Library</a> Ann Arbor, MI 48104 United States
6.	<a href="#">Sidney Martin Library UWI - Cave Hill</a> The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus Bridgetown, BB11000 Barbados



slightly 'moth-eaten' booklet here displayed". Remy declares "An 'old boy' from Invaders came up to me one day when I was practicing with the band [WSMF2004], and said smilingly 'You should have this', pointing to the section Ellie Mannette, next to which was pencilled the note (MUSIC)". "Imagine" she continued "He hung on to this thing ... (for 45 years) and give it to me with the hope that T&T pan history .... would get wider and more accurate coverage to 'the people'; than this booklet alone implied".

It was printed in 1959 by Shell Trinidad Limited for the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University College of the West Indies to accompany Raphael "Boy Blue" Samuel, 'Pan-in-Cement' sculpture exhibition. To our knowledge there are three alternative versions of this booklet in existence, the one handed to Remy is a draft which may not have been used at the *Pan-in-Cement* sculpture exhibition.



Figure 1: Version 1

by Ivy M. Lawrence, resident tutor but important parts were omitted in this initial draft. In particular, the extended Foreword which adds a huge dimension to Simmonds's work is missing.

**1958** – First draft of the booklet (Remy's copy). An artist named "Glasgow" sketched a 'pan-around-neck' pannist (with the incorrect posture of his hands around the neck strap - see Fig. 1). The book has an 'Introduction' by W. Austin Simmonds and a brief 'Foreword'



Figure 2: Version 2

<http://www.seetobago.org/trinidad/pan/history/ebooks/wasimmonds/panmen1959wasimmonds.htm>

### 1959 – Second Version

A very professional booklet designed and published in England by R.T. West & Co. Ltd for BWIA International. The front cover has two well sketched colourful pannists playing red tenor pans under a coconut tree wearing white suits, below the BWIA logo (see Fig. 2). The back cover states that additional copies may be obtained through BWIA at Kent House, Maraval, Trinidad. These may have gone

out of print rapidly as copies were soon inexistent. The book includes a comprehensive 'Foreword' which goes back to the history of drums in ancient Sumeria (modern Iraq) some 3,000 years BC to the more modern snare drum and bass drums from Arabic Spain, Palestine and Turkey respectively. The body of the text is retained but there is also a useful 'Editor's Note' at the end. Unfortunately, the personal and passionate 'Introduction' written by W. Austin Simmonds was removed. This 'Introduction' is reproduced below:

#### "INTRODUCTION

There are thousands of 'Panmen' whose names it has been impossible to mention in this booklet. Certain persons, by their creativeness or ingenuity, have introduced techniques that have been milestones along the road that the Steelband has thus far travelled. These must, of necessity, be mentioned by name. But I have compiled the data set forth in this short study, bearing constantly in mind, and more often than not being helped by, a few of those thousands who have lived 'Pan', who have been able to contribute to the development of this cultural pattern, who have filled a need for musical expression in our people, who have devoted thousands of hours to practice, striving to attain an elusive perfection of 'Pan'. To those persons, and to Raphael who tells their story with his hands, I humbly dedicate this work".

W. Austin Simmonds.

During the conference "*Calypso, Carnival, Steelband; Expressive Cultures of the Caribbean Diaspora*" held at Founders College, York University, Canada. September 26-28, 2019, a copy of this edition was displayed and met with considerable interest - 60 years after it was printed! This was retrieved from the archives of the late Kenn Shah (Caribana pioneer) which is currently being digitised by York University, initially by the late Professor Christopher Innes and currently



by Denise Challenger  
(<https://scalar.library.yorku.ca/caribana/about-kenn-shah>)

#### 1970s - Version 3 (Figure 3)

The finding of a 2<sup>nd</sup> version of the booklet prompted a search for other versions that might exist and a 3<sup>rd</sup> version was found. A collector in the UK's southern coastal city of Portsmouth held a single copy of this 3<sup>rd</sup> version which was purchased by the editor.

This was lithographically printed in the USA without a date but appears to be early 1970s. The central figure on the teal cover shows a caricature of a young white woman wearing a bikini whilst pretending to play a tenor pan, her hands up in the air and holding bass-pan sticks (Fig. 3). The artist is not named but one can only guess that Simmonds may not have been impressed with such an indifferent, touristic

representation of his work. It stated, “*Published by British West Indian Airways*” and “*For additional copies write to the airline at 530 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y.10036*” but are also unavailable.

---

### **Syncretism as a Means to Overcome Barriers; Shango and Indian Drums**

The abolition of slavery in 1834-38 led to the introduction and movement of a gruelling labour force through indentureship in 1845 in which waves of East Indian and Chinese immigrants predominantly, set foot in Trinidad, Jamaica, Guyana and Suriname (Hill, 1993). Their sole aim was to boost the production of commodity crops to further swell the coffers of Britain following punishing decades of unforgiving, brutal slavery. The limited opportunity for slaves to express themselves occurred during the burning of sugar cane foliage prior to harvesting in the ‘Canboulay’ celebrations (French; *cannes brulées*, meaning burnt cane). However, the ‘Canboulay Riots’ between 1881 -1884 (between Port of Spain, San Fernando and Princess Town) resulted in the huge loss of lives and led to drumming being banned by 1883 and stick-fighting the following year (Cowley, 2008). This was based on the pretext that drumming was used to communicate among African groups and increased the chances of insubordination and riots. This paved the way for an alternative form of expression that ushered in a substitute, Tamboo Bamboo, in 1890s which Simmonds recognised as a transition under the heading “BAMBOO TO PAN” (pp 7).

Through the loophole of religious dogma, selected African devotees and East Indians were allowed to retain Shango and Indian Drums respectively. Simmonds gave great prominence to syncretism which occurred several times under the headings;

‘SHANGO’, ‘THE EAST INDIANS’ and ‘DRUMS FROM INDIA’ and with the arrival of the Chinese workers he titled this subheading, ‘THE CHINESE INFLUENCE’. Simmonds stated, “The Indians, although a minority group, contributed more than might have been expected, for while the Negro had to practice his Shango-worship until recently under legal restrictions, the Indian had his guarantee of national privileges” (pp 4). Added to the African, East Indian and Chinese, were diverse ethnic groups of French, Spanish, Corsican, Italian, German, American, Syrian/Lebanese, Portuguese and British who began settling in Trinidad from 1825 (Hill, 1993). Simmonds witnessed first-hand the intermingling of this ‘callaloo’ melting pot in a country that naturally celebrated every event in music, costume and dancing.

#### **‘DRUMS FROM INDIA’**

Simmonds placed great emphasis on the actual art form of Indian culture and how this was interwoven into “the evolution of our national music” (pp 7), with the goats-skin-covered ‘Taza’ as key in the religious festivals of Hosay and Ramdilla. This was eloquently expanded by Ramtahal and Kumar (2016) and an earlier detailed analysis of Tassa drums and their direct influence on the evolution of steelpan by Mahabir (1984). The feast of La Divina Pastora in Siparia (“Siparee ke Mai”) which brought Hindus and Roman Catholics together is often cited as one of the early examples of syncretism. Hosay in particular shares a number of parallel developments with carnival. For example, in 1884, the British colonial authorities issued an ordinance to prevent the public Hosay commemorations. Appeals from the Muslim community failed, and it was a Hindu, Sookhoo, who petitioned the government to allow the festival to proceed in Port of Spain. However, it was ignored in the South and the so called “Muhurram Massacre” took place in Mon Repos, San Fernando on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October, 1884,



when women, children and men were shot by the police to disperse the procession leaving 22 "Indians" dead and more 120 seriously injured.

With such support for each other and the free exchange of ideas, Simmonds hailed this interaction from various sectors of society that helped nurtured the national music of today. In a broader sense it fits in well with a society described in 1962 at its Independence as the most cosmopolitan nation in the world, and vividly expressed in the words of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago. In summary, Mahabir (1984) cites three compelling examples in which 'Drums from India' would have had a bearing on the evolution of pan viz. (1) hanging of the drum around the neck of the player and the use of two sticks for playing (2) the initial idea to beat out the shape of the oil drum into a convex form similar to the *Daboo* type *Tassa* of Hosay. It would have been more difficult to create than the concave shape that was later adopted by Ellie Mannette and (3) the use of heat to temper the metal oil drum which was a requisite for the tuning of the *Tassa* drum.

In the general context of carnival, Ramdilla which began in 1896 and lasted for 5 days in St James, added dance drama, required intricate wire bending skills to construct huge effigies, craftsmanship in papier-mâché floats, personifications, parade and *Tassa* drumming and brought together Hindus, Muslims and later Africans. The Hindu festival, Phagwa added colour and songs of heroism. St James was a key hotspot of Hosay and mixed activities for forging cultural links. Steelbands located there included Sun Valley, North Stars, Crossfire, Symphonites, Tripoli, Cross Roads, Cairo, Del Vikings, Pandemonics, West Side Symphony, Third World and Pan Groove. The Indian *Dhol* drum was a key driver and was retained in its pure form by Casablanca of Belmont (Mahabir, 1984). Later Steelbands such as Guinness

Cavaliers (1972) and Phase II Steelband (1986) brought the *Tassa* and Hosay experience to life in their Panorama appearances.

---

## The Northern Centric View of Steelpan Persists

Simmonds may not have been aware that during his time there were parallel activities taking place in south Trinidad especially in San Fernando. Perplexed, he stated that the "*Trinidadian-Indian is unexcelled, although often unnoticed. But there has yet to be an Indian first pan player of any excellence*". Living legend Cyril Khamai was a tuner and arranger for many southern steelbands from the mid-1940s to 1957, when he left home for the UK (Martin and Funk 2013; Funk, 2019). See link: (<http://www.classifieds.guardian.co.tt/carnival/2013-02-05/cyril-khamai-global-pan-pioneer>). Khamai's experience was entirely different and in accord with Mahabir's (1984) observations. For example, during preparations for TASPO's epic journey to play at the Festival of Britain in 1951, they played at Empire cinema on Penitence Street, San Fernando to fundraise. The two TASPO southern representatives, Theo Stephens (Free French) and Belgrave Bonaparte (Southern Symphony) worked with Khamai. The latter noted that a common practice among East Indian players at the time was to hide their identities through the use of various caps/covers. He cited for example the East Indian pannists ~~who~~ were Stephens' finest players in 1951; 'Ali Bocas', 'Ramloop' and 'Harry Boodoo', the latter played a solo on a cello pan in the 1954 Music Festival.

When Stephens returned from Britain in 1951, he started a new Steelband 'Metronomes' and here again three East Indians, Raja and his two brothers were his top players. Khamai's own Steelband, Melody Makers (early 1950s) was led by

Zaid “Tosca” Mohammed who influenced the legendary Lennox ‘Bobby’ Mohammed. Tosca formed the new Steelband, ‘Trinidad Maestros’ in Pleasantville, San Fernando which was led by pan tuner, Steve Lalsingh who also worked with Lennox ‘Bobby’ Mohammad. These activities paved the way for Mohammed’s Guinness Cavaliers, with his brothers Selwyn and Lester and several East Indian members of the band to break the dominance of the north and surpass all expectations by taking the mighty Cavaliers to its first panorama victory in 1965 in Port of Spain and showcasing south Trinidad at the forefront of Steelband development and the birth of the ‘Big Band’ (Shah, 2006, 2008).

Under the section ‘The Chinese Influence’, Simmonds cited Bonaparte’s Southern Symphony Steelband in 1950 which also included a few Chinese pan players. He focused mainly on traditional cultural influences such as the ‘Dance of the Lion’ with accompanying cymbals and the inclusion of Chinese caricatures during carnival. Khamai added directly to this by recalling his experience of playing for carnival in Port of Spain in 1955 with the *Chinese Association of Trinidad and Tobago* steelband called “Zone Stars” led by Hanik Hakim which started in the early 1950s. Interestingly, their instruments were tuned by Philmore “Boots” Davidson of City Syncopators and TASPO. ‘Boots’ later founded Nostalgia Steelband, London in 1964 and was reacquainted with Cyril Khamai once more. As recently as June/July 2019, “The Trinidad & Tobago Chinese Steel Ensemble” scored a

resounding success during its tour of Canada. (see links:

<https://www.panonthenet.com/news/2019/jul/trinidad-tobago-chinese-steel-ensemble-wows-audiences-in-toronto-7-24-2019.htm>).

Simmonds’s booklet is concise but provides deep insight into the many facets that contributed to the development of this complex instrument. Importantly it opens the door to fill significant gaps by later contributors in areas that may have been overlooked at the time. Emphasis has been given to prominent individuals but as Simmonds stated there has “*been milestones along the road that the Steelband has thus far travelled*” and his dedication was for “a few of those thousands who have lived ‘Pan’ coupling their creativeness and ingenuity. From this a more holistic picture will eventually emerge of the “*musical expression in our people, who have devoted thousands of hours to practice, striving to attain an elusive perfection of Pan*”. Discoveries are never made in a vacuum by an individual whether it is science, arts or religion. From rudimentary beginnings, ideas crisscross communities and evolve in peaks and troughs and pivotal steps are often only perceived with hindsight. Simmonds captured this process innocently and objectively, writing purely from observation; standing back and articulating his views with brevity and vigour. The editors believe that this is one of the reasons why this booklet will continue to attract attention and leave a longstanding impression on the reader.

**References:**

- Cowley, John, 2008. *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making* Cambridge University Press, ISBN-10: 0521653894, ISBN-13: 978-0521653893
- Funk, Ray, 2019. Cyril Khamai, Quiet Pan Pioneer. *Pan Podium*, Issue 24, pp 34-35  
<https://www.panpodium.com/cyril-dougla-khamai>
- Hill, Donald R., 1993. *Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad*. Publisher, University Press of Florida, ISBN-10: 0813012228, ISBN-13: 978-0813012223.
- Jones, Anthony Mark, 1975. *Steelband: a history; the Winston "Spree" Simon story*. Port of Spain, Trinidad : Educo Press
- Mahabir, Noorkumar, 1984. *The Influence of the Tassa on the Making of the Steelband: The East Indian contribution to the Trinidad Carnival*, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Accessioned; 2015-09-21T16:23:16Z  
*Trinidad Express New papers* (17<sup>th</sup> February 1984).
- Martin, Andrew, Funk, Ray, 2013. Cyril Khamai, Global Pan Pioneer. *The Trinidad Guardian*, Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- Ramtahal, Kumaree, Kumar, Marilyn, 2016. Documenting and Archiving the Ramleela Legacy in Trinidad: Practice and Prospects. *Caribbean Library Journal*, 4, 41-61.
- Shah, Haroun, 2006. Trinidad in the 1960s: Transformation to the Big Band. Profile of Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed. *Proceedings of the First Biennial Steelpan Conference*. *Steelband Music and Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/>
- Shah, Haroun, 2008. Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed and Guinness Cavaliers. *Pan Podium*. Issue 16, pp16 -17.
-

## LOST MEMORIES

### The World's Largest Digitised Video Archive of Caribbean Culture and Society

**Christopher Laird**

Banyan Ltd.

3 Adam Smith Square, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, West Indies

#### Abstract

*It happened recently  
People in a village lost they memory  
Oh me darling!*

Spoiler (Theophilus Phillip)

Since the mid-70s Banyan, the southern Caribbean's oldest independent television programme production company has been exploring the Caribbean. Through 500 films, documentaries, dramas, concert performances, in depth interviews, we have been able to reflect our societies and their cultures and thereby afford Caribbean people the opportunity most societies enjoy, the ability to see themselves on their televisions, thereby enabling an audience accustomed to decoding foreign films and images to objectify their own lives. Consequently, after nearly half a century we have amassed an unprecedented video archive of post-independence Caribbean culture and society since the invention of the videocassette. Now digitised it should be available to all. This paper describes the story of this accomplishment.

**Key Words:** Banyan Ltd, Gayelle Ltd, Caribbean Films, Documentaries, Drama, Video Digital Archiving.

#### Introduction

##### What is Banyan?

Banyan began as the Trinidad & Tobago Television Workshop (TTTW) after a course to stimulate endogenous television programmes run by UNESCO, UWI and Trinidad & Tobago television (TTT) in 1974.

The TTTW started a series for TTT in 1975 called 'Banyan' and was so popular the TTTW was increasingly referred to as Banyan. In 1976 we established our own production facilities and studio to produce the anglophone Caribbean's first television 'soap opera', *Who The C.A.P. Fits...* and

registered the company Banyan Limited, the rest is history.

Banyan's productions have been dedicated to the aim of "Enabling Caribbean people to see themselves and the world through their own lives." Banyan set out to show how we, as a people, had, through patience, determination and existential need, built a foundation for a Caribbean civilisation.

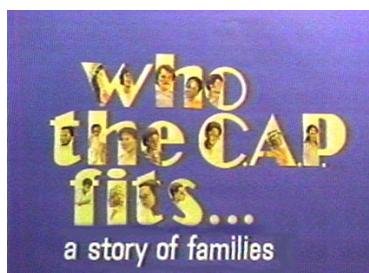
We assumed that, by documenting and mirroring our culture and society, a repository could be constructed, a resource would be created for a more Caribbean centred perspective. So, we did our work:



documenting, exploring, creating dramas, telling stories up and down the Caribbean

for over 45 years (see for example, Laird, 2013; Laird, 2020)

The following list gives an idea of the scope and significance of Banyan's output:



1. The anglophone Caribbean's first two television soap operas, *Who The C.A.P. Fits...* (1977) and *Morrall* (1978)

2. It's first 'made for television movie', *The Rig*, written and directed by Derek Walcott.



3. The longest running independently produced television cultural magazine show, *Gayelle*, which ran for six years between 1985 and 1992 on Trinidad & Tobago television and is still shown on regional television.

4. *Caribbean Eye*, the 13-episode series on Caribbean culture, the only such series produced by a Caribbean production company.



5. Documentaries on Kali worship in Trinidad, Carnival, Hucksters inter-island trading networks, stick-fighting, ...



6. *Soca In She Samba*, Banyan follows David Rudder to Bahia in Brazil to look for the Bahia Gyal in 1986 after winning the calypso monarch and Road March.



7. *Crossing Over*, internationally award-winning documentary when Kaiso musician Lancelot Layne exchanges visits with Ghanaian Highlife musician Ko Nimo. (1989)

8. *The Dish Ran Away With The Spoon*, an award winning documentary produced with the BBC on the effects of US television on Caribbean culture and shown in 120 countries. (1992)



9. Establishing the Caribbean's first 100% Caribbean content free to air television station, *Gayelle The Channel*



## The Archive



*The Banyan Archive of 3000 tapes from 1975-2020*

If one was to search the Banyan Archive database on the subject of Carnival, Steelband and Calypso it would reveal 444 records on steelband, 2,426 records on Calypso and 1,001 records on Carnival. These records would include extensive interviews with the Mighty Sparrow, Roaring Lion, Kitchener, Merchant, Byron Lee, David Rudder, Peter Minshall, Anthony Williams, Sterling Betancourt,

Neville Jules, Mighty Terror, Brigo, Drupatee Ramgooni, Boogie Sharpe, Shadow, Black Stalin, Russell Henderson, Fitzroy Coleman and literally scores more.

Only in the Banyan Archive can one see and hear Ras Shorty I demonstrate how he originated Soca or Lord Melody describe his meeting with Harry Belafonte and his subsequent career.



*Ras Shorty I (Garfield Blackman) 1988*



*Lord Melody (Fitzroy Alexander) 1985*

Only in the Banyan Archive can one see a number of years of the mas of Jason Griffith, Peter Minshall and Stephen Derrick.



*Fancy Sailor Jason Griffith 1988, Paradise Lost King Minshall 1976, Indian Stephen Derrick 1994*

Only in the Banyan Archive can one see and hear Sterling Betancourt in a two-and-a-half-hour interview tell, among other things, why Lieutenant Griffith insisted TASPO not clean their drums rusted by two weeks sailing across the Atlantic when they arrived in the UK.



*Sterling Betancourt (2000)*

In short, what we have is an irreplaceable record of carnival, calypso and steelband over the past 45 years, the loss of which would leave present and future generations totally oblivious of what their cultural ancestors looked and sounded like.

## The Digitisation Process

In early 2010 Banyan sent a letter to about 20 institutions, mainly in North America, that we know have programmes centred on the Caribbean and what was known as 'Black Studies' inviting them to assist in digitising this vast resource.

Only two responded: The University of the West Indies (UWI) at St. Augustine in Trinidad and York University in Canada.

Jennifer Joseph, head librarian at the UWI library in St. Augustine and Professor Christopher Innes, Distinguished Research Professor at York University and Canada Research Chair in Performance & Culture suggested a pilot programme to test the

feasibility of digitising the archive. Innes had considerable interest in carnival arts and was a strong advocate of retaining it as a street carnival (Innes, 2008). Consequently, we agreed on a pilot programme whereby 50 hours of video would be digitised. The UWI library committed a 'small stipend' to me to compile the metadata of those 50 hours.

The pilot project was successfully carried out in 2010 with copies of the metadata and the 50 hours of digitised video lodged with each party. As a result, Christopher Innes agreed to proceed with the process of digitisation at York.

In mid 2011 I took 68 tapes to York to start the main task of digitising the archive. The agreement with York University is that on



completion of the process York University would have access to the archive for exclusively internal use with restrictions barring downloading or copying.

Over four years between 2011 and 2015, Banyan, with the heroic help of Christopher Innes, digitised the contents of over 3000 tapes from the archive. Christopher Innes set up a unit to do the work at York University and digitised about 80% while we did the rest.

This involved me travelling to and from Toronto with suitcases full of tapes and finally we shipped 13 crates consisting of 1000 tapes to York to complete the process. All in all, some 2000 tapes were transported to York. This mammoth task was followed by three years of full-time work to build the database without which the digitised archive would be virtually useless. All this was done without funds from any other institution.



*Crates in the archive being packed to be shipped to York University 2013*

I call Christopher Innes's assistance heroic because the process took longer than we had planned and involved extraordinary logistics on the part of the unit that Christopher Innes set up, using post-graduate students. Throughout all the gruelling four years Professor Innes kept finding the funds to enable the process to continue and steadfastly stuck by me. Any other person would have given up. He didn't. For this, Banyan and I, and hopefully, the world, will be forever grateful. Christopher Innes died in 2017. The Banyan Archive will forever be associated with this extraordinary man.

The Banyan Archive database contains 15,000 records. Each scene and sequence in over 1000 hours of video were analysed,

records of their technical specifications, content description, lists of participants, locations and key words were registered so that they can be searched with the click of a mouse.

How was this achieved when the surviving video tapes, languishing in the libraries of television stations and video facilities throughout the region, seem to be condemned to remain at risk in obsolete tape formats? What riches remain hidden in those libraries?

The Banyan Archive contained tapes in five main formats. When we began in 1974, we used ½" black and white reel to reel tapes on the Sony Portapak format. In the late 70s the first professional video cassettes (¾" U-

Matic) became available and formed the main format for video production for the next ten years. This was followed by the Sony Betacam ½" cassette (not Betamax, which was a consumer version) and the Digital Videotape (DV) cassette approximately ten years later. Now, of course video is recorded directly on to a memory chip or hard-drive.

I list the formats because they hold the key to the main obstacle to the survival of video archives. Most people think that the age of the tape itself is the main danger, but if kept, as we did, in a climate-controlled vault, a videotape remains playable indefinitely (or I should say we have not yet found the limit nearly half a century later). Of the 3000 tapes in our archive dating from the mid 70s only half a dozen have resisted stable play and digitisation. This was not due to the tape's age but to the imperfect initial recording or a physically defective tape.

No, the problem is not the tapes and their age. The main problem is the availability of working machines – most notably the ½" U-Matic – which are no longer manufactured, their parts are increasingly scarce except through cannibalisation of machines. Technicians who can service these machines have retired or passed on. Even for York university in Toronto I had to physically ship one of our machines in the dead of winter as it was impossible to get the required technical support from Sony Canada and from local technicians.

I believe that we just managed to complete our digitisation by the skin of our teeth. The window of opportunity was closing fast and now would pose enormous logistical and financial barriers for those attempting to rescue the legacy recordings of the region's video holdings. It is still not impossible if there are sufficient financial resources to purchase reconditioned machines (and continue to do so as the volume and time consumed by digitisation wears the machines) and pay for technical support,

the staff required and the physical accommodation. Digitisation of video takes longer than real time as old tapes clog playback heads and one tape may have to be digitised repeatedly in sections and edited together (the 1000 hours of Banyan's tapes took four years).

Those carrying out the process need to know the content. The York students who were digitising our tapes did not know the significance of what they were handling, and the cohort changed every year. The "guy in the grey shirt" was CLR James, "man reading poetry in garden" was Martin Carter. Remember also that it isn't enough to just digitise the tapes. It has to be done at a level of quality no less than the original. York would send me the digitised files by hard drive or online, I would check them and, many times, I had to ask them to redo the digitisation of some tapes due to the quality. The way the unit was set up and manned made it unlikely if they encountered a technical problem, that they would persevere beyond a certain limit. I would travel there about three times a year, not only to transport tapes but also to check why some tapes may have been digitised at unacceptable quality. I would then return home with the problem tapes and rescue them myself.

What our experience proves is that it can only be accomplished if there is a passionate commitment to the process. I have attended archive conferences in the region for years and hear every time how digitisation needs to take place. So far nothing has.

What I have described above relates only to the process of converting videotape to digital video files. Not even if 100% successful in executing this time consuming and painstaking process, the result would be useless without a database of the resulting metadata.

In other words, the success of digitisation does not rest solely with the technology and its stability but also in the cultural knowledge and experience of those doing the digitising and, more importantly, those recording the metadata and constructing the database. The main personnel in the process would have to be extremely experienced, have comprehensive knowledge of the content and be compulsively meticulous. That costs. Christopher Inness and I were not paid to do this. The costs would have been unacceptable with the 'budget' we were operating with. That requires serious commitment to the aims and the necessity of rescuing our history and heritage. It seems that this is lacking and may be one of the main reasons why it hasn't happened. The librarians and the archivists are committed but those with the purse strings are cavalierly negligent or just ignorant of its importance.

Banyan video distinguishes itself by the fact that it was filmed by people who were intimate with Caribbean culture (after all, we made the *Caribbean Eye* series!). It was all filmed by professional videographers, not amateurs. Its quality is the best possible at the time it was recorded with the resources available.

If we had not filmed all the archive ourselves (I personally shot at least 80% of the footage) it would have been almost impossible to record comprehensive metadata regarding the identity of those people in each shot or when and where it was recorded, let alone contextualising the significance of the piece and the key search words they would answer to.

---

### **The Power of a Digitised Video Archive**

OK. So, we have digitised this massive archive, the fruit of nearly half a century of work seeking to capture and share the humanity, the courage, the ingenuity and determination of our people as they navigated the post-colonial Caribbean.

What does that mean though? Cultural and social science research is heavily invested in text and video is often treated as a sideshow like an illustration of a text rather than as resource in its own right.

This lack of appreciation of the power of video may be understandable with the region's lack of a comprehensive, well documented and accessible video archive. But, now, with the Banyan digitised video collection, that has to change.

I would like to sketch a few ways in which a video archive offers researchers unprecedented opportunities and in fact opens up whole fields of inquiry hitherto poorly served by text.

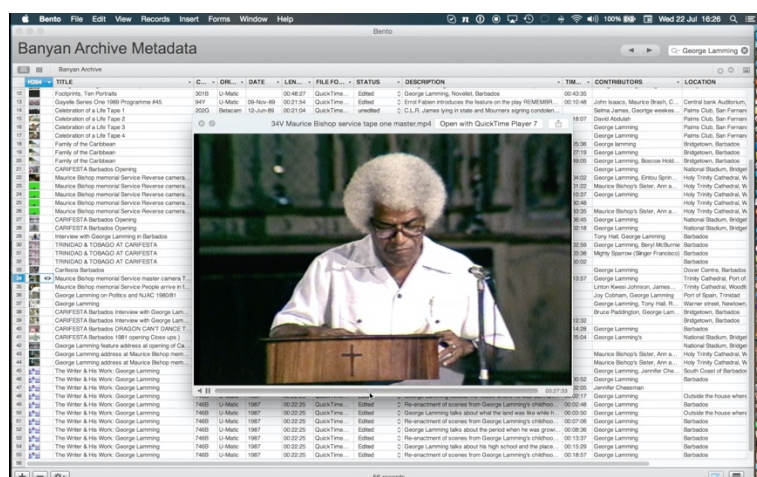
An obvious example is Dance. Choreographers, practitioners and researchers have had, until now, to rely almost solely on the fading memories of an older generation, those who are still with us, to reproduce, re-stage or study classical and traditional dances. Video is the only sure way to preserve dance. A similar point can be made about Theatre, in fact whole areas of anthropological research are suddenly facilitated by video in the analysing of festivals, religious practices, musical performance, oral culture, visual arts etc.

When your collection is the result of documentation by practitioners rooted in the culture, sensitive to its nuances and value, elements previously supported only by text suddenly come alive with added meaning and significance.

Let me tell you a story:

When I presented the completed digitised archive to the head librarian at the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine, Trinidad, I asked her to suggest a topic to search for in the database. She suggested George Lamming.





*George Lamming delivering a eulogy for Maurice Bishop in the archive.*

Of the 56 records in the database that were identified we selected at random George Lamming's eulogy for Grenadian Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, shortly after his murder in 1983. The occasion was the memorial service for Maurice held in the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Now, one could say that all one needs to study the eulogy would be a transcript. But look at what would be missed:

George Lamming's renowned facility as an orator, the sense of occasion, the emotion and purpose behind the delivery, the make up of the congregation – Maurice's mother and sister, activists from Europe, North America and the region – e.g. the UK, poet

Linton Kwesi Johnston and Broadcaster and publisher, Darcus Howe.

But that isn't all. When people see recordings of their own history and culture it is more than with academic interest. A personal connection is made.

For example: The librarian asked me what steelband played at the service. The database told us it was Birdsong. She said, "Well you know, I was playing in the band." And I was able to show her the band playing. Then she said, "My niece sang at the service." I was able to show her niece singing. Then she said, "Today is her birthday, I would love to give her a copy of that video." No problem.



*Birdsong Steelband and Librarian's Niece performing at memorial service for Maurice Bishop in 1983*

## Personal Connection.

Another thing video can do that other media can't is show a practitioner commentating on his own work even while he is creating it. E.g. distinguished water colourist, Jackie Hinkson, explaining his techniques and his decisions while actually painting.

When you have an archive covering 40 years and as large as the Banyan Collection you have cross references within the archive itself. Not only can one see how people and events have changed over 40 years such as Derek Walcott or C.L.R. James,



*Derek Walcott interviewed in 1980*



*Derek Walcott interviewed in 1991*



*CLR James interviewed in 1980*



*CLR James interviewed in 1987*

but you also have early records of people in childhood who grew up to become significant figures in their field.





For example: The internationally recognised Steelpan soloist, Duvonne Stewart seen here arranging and conducting a major steelband, Renegades, for the 2015 Panorama competition was first interviewed at age eight in a panyard in Tobago in 1985. Or Soca mega star, Machel Montano at age 11. At home with his family band and again 2015 year with his award-winning song for the Carnival.



These are just a few examples of the way this awesome digital video collection adds to the possibilities and tools for us to analyse and research our own lives.

## Accessibility

This archive gives us, as Caribbean people, for the first time in our history, the opportunity to step back from the rush of NOW and look at our culture and society ever since the invention of the video cassette, and add voices – some born more than 100 years ago – to our ever-present inquiry into who we are and where we're headed.

Accessibility to an archive like this would be of particular value to people of Caribbean descent living outside the Caribbean. While those communities have developed their own cultures, they retain a close relationship with the region and the roots of their creativity is often informed by the tales of their elders of legendary figures such as Kitchener, Melody, Ray Holman, Neville Jules etc.

Young people, even in the region, are bombarded by new, images, sounds of North American or Indian stars. They know

little or nothing of their own. With an accessible archive we at least know that they can, if they want to, access the legends of their parents and grandparents, see and hear them, get acquainted with their uniqueness, their charisma, their personalities. What a magnificent gift to our children this collection is!

This archive should be acquired and exploited by an institution, preferably Caribbean. As Banyan winds down its operations it is vital that this unique and invaluable resource should be accessible by students and researchers and ordinary people worldwide. At present it can be accessed by institutions via Alexander Street Press:

<https://search.alexanderstreet.com/search?searchstring=banyan&showall=1>

and institutions can subscribe to it but this is not ideal as the uncompressed physical archive needs to be housed by an enduring institution, preferably a university or library, to ensure its security.

For the first time we now have an accessible, vast and rich resource of visual/oral records of ourselves, compiled by ourselves, articulating our view of the world. We no longer have to rely solely on the odd Caribbean production, or the mass of material generated outside the Caribbean about us and have to decode the stories of others to arrive at our truths.

At long last the voices of the post-independence Caribbean can be heard among the video records of the world, demanding attention in their own right and inviting appreciation of the region's richness and stunning complexity.

But because of the continued ignorance of our financial gatekeepers this huge, unique

and valuable resource, like Spoiler's *Money in the Bank*, remains inaccessible to the public, our students and researchers.

I leave Spoiler with the last words. From his calypso *Lost Memories* about a village that had lost its memory. In his last verse he sings of Mr. Cornelius who, like Albert Camus' *Outsider*, is treated like a criminal because he didn't cry at a funeral.

Mr. Cornelius had forgotten how to cry.

Have we as a society become a Mr. Cornelius? Are we condemned to continue to forget how to remember?

*Just because he lost his memory  
What an awful thing to stand up and see  
Put yourself in his position to imagine  
He forget to remember that he forget remembering  
Spoiler (Theophilus Phillip)*

More information about the Banyan Archive and a free download of the database in Excel format are available at the following link:

<http://www.pancaribbean.com/banyan/archivedatabase.htm>

---

## References

Innes, Christopher, 2013. *Carnival, Theory and Practice*. pp. vii- ix. Eds. Innes Christopher, Rutherford, Annabel and Bogar, Brigitte. Africa World Press, Trenton, London, Cape Town.

Laird, Christopher, September 2013. Banyan News  
<http://www.pancaribbean.com/banyan/banyannews.htm>

Laird, Christopher, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Filmmakers Collaborative of Trinidad and Tobago <https://filmco.org/news/twelve-questions-with-christopher-laird>

---

## **Youth Restiveness and Empowerment in Nigeria: Role of the Steelpan**

**Bowie Sonnie Bowie**

CEO, Africa-Trinidad & Tobago Steelpan Development Company Ltd. and

Researcher, Peace and Conflict Resolution Resource Center

#24 Ijebu Ode Crescent, Agbara Estate, Agbara, Ogun State- Nigeria

Email: bsonniebowei@gmail.com; Telephone: +234.817.037.3891

---

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on ways that youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria and other countries around it may be reduced through vocational training in steelpan technology. The paper highlights the fact that poverty and unemployment amongst the youth in Nigeria provide the recipe for vices and have caused Nigeria great losses in its socioeconomic structure. After identifying a youth-friendly vocation in Trinidad and Tobago, sociocultural similarities and experiences of youth in Trinidad and Tobago and Nigeria were noted. Because of the similarities in culture and the reasons for violence in both countries, development of the steelpan in Nigeria may be one of the solutions to poverty, as it has helped to restructure the economic position of youths in Trinidad and Tobago. Strategies are provided for Nigerian stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunity to improve the nation's economy by establishing vocational training in various disciplines of the steelpan.

---

**Key Words:** Poverty, Youth Unemployment, Youth Empowerment, Vocational Training, Youth Restiveness, Poverty Alleviation, Steelpan, Youth Engagement, Economic Growth and Sustenance.

### **Introduction**

Beginning from 1967, barely seven years after Nigeria gained independence from British rule, citizens began revolting against the government for various reasons including deprivation of the rights of citizens, segregation, nepotism, and massive corruption of government officials leading to severe poverty of the majority of its citizens (Okeke *et al.*, 2017). Unrest in Nigeria began long before the civil war between 1967 and 1970 where indigenes of a particular tribe demanded to secede from Nigeria to form their own nation, known as Republic of Biafra (Falode, 2011). The reasons for the attempted secession were

mainly stated as segregation and nepotism against the Igbo tribe, as well as generalized poverty in Nigeria. Various other tribes have suffered this same fate with the government of Nigeria, and this has resulted to varied degrees of vices and violent reactions from citizens, leading up to sociopolitical unrest and vast insecurity over the years. In the past, Nigeria was one of the destinations tourists from all over the world wished to visit. It has now become one of the most unsafe countries on the African continent with very high rates of crime, youth restiveness, kidnapping and hostage taking, terrorism, civil unrest, piracy, fraud, and corruption (Suleiman and Karim, 2015) resulting from high levels of poverty amongst citizens. Citizens and

experts blame the nation's high poverty rate and the resulting vices on the past and present governments, political office holders as well as their collaborators, and believe that good governance would have averted most of these depravities, to a very large extent (Carsten, 2019).

In seeking solutions to poverty and youth restiveness, the Nigerian government set up various youth empowerment and poverty alleviation programs across the nation. Unfortunately, these programs are stereotyped and structured to have only vocations that have been in existence over the years, with little or no room for youth-friendly and emergent creative and technological trends, and which handlers of these programs assume to be viable. This assumption has proved to be more harmful to Nigerians and the nation's economy, because rather than providing the intended results, billions of dollars are being flushed down the drains through unsustainable vocational training that has been abandoned by trainees, or that yield little or no return on investment (Adedokun, 2019).

Nigeria shares some similarities with Trinidad and Tobago. They are both nations endowed with mineral resources such as oil<sup>1</sup>, and have both experienced a share of youth unemployment, poverty, violence and civil unrest with aggrieved youths forming and running deadly gangs and violent extremist groups (Adams *et al.* 2018). Sheridan (1985) suggests that the Caribbean twin Island and other South American countries are inhabited by 35 percent of West Africans (including Nigerians) who were taken away from Africa forcefully, to labour in plantations and the oil fields. However, Trinidad and Tobago has been able to transcend beyond tribe, violence, plantations and oil fields to harness the nation's resources and potentials of the youths, to produce viable economic returns through creative, youth-friendly vocations in music and the arts,

focusing on percussive instruments. Although, these tribes from West Africa have been re-indigenized, history still traces them back to their roots in Africa from where the foundation of their culture in percussion (drumming) and music evolved.

From Trinidad and Tobago, the African traditional drums transmuted through technology to become one of the world's greatest musical inventions of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Waste empty oil barrels were used in the production of the steelpan which is a melodic percussive instrument having the ability to produce musical notes equivalent to that of a conventional musical instrument such as the piano. With this instrument, competitions were established with bands and fans. The establishment of bands and competitions meant that instruments must be produced in steady quantity and quality to meet the demands of the steelpan artisans. This in turn translated to economic development and a reduction in the crime rate through youth engagement and empowerment via the steelpan art form. This has therefore generated an interest in the exploration of other possibilities for empowering the Nigerian youth through vocations that provide recreation, indicate prospects of being economically viable, and which will promote Nigeria's diverse cultures and potentials while boosting economic development.

---

## Desk Analysis

### 1) Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria

Nigeria's most persistent and reoccurring problem is that of unemployment and poverty, especially among the youths. Zehadul Karim and Surajo (2016) suggest that this issue is a serious phenomenon in Nigeria and establishes a general problem involving the youths themselves, as well as the social, political and economic structures

<sup>1</sup>In 2018, Trinidad and Tobago's petroleum industry collapsed and is no longer extant.

of the country. Though the government has made several efforts to empower the youths, the problem of the youths accepting the available vocations and practising them as a means of livelihood after their training has not been fruitful. This may be attributed to a lack of interest in the vocation or a lack of support in acquiring equipment and tools required to practise. This, of course, has given indications that there are no tangible efforts by the government to improve the enthusiasm of these youths towards sustainable national development and poverty eradication through vocational training in viable disciplines that are youth-friendly, innovative, recreational and attractive to the benefactors.

The consequence of a nation having impoverished youths leads to a situation that stimulates their involvement in all sorts of crimes that threaten the peace and national stability of the nation. With government's failure to empower youths with more creative, recreational, interesting sustainable vocations that ensure poverty eradication in addition to other long existing vocations, youth restiveness will continue to engulf the nation. While suggesting remedies, Zehadul Karim and Surajo (2016) posit that focus should be emphasized on youth empowerment through employment creation, establishment of well-articulated policies that ensure youth all-round stability, propagation of moral reorientation, provision of sporting and recreational services and training of youths in the philosophy of tolerance and hard work.

---

## **2) Youth Restiveness and Unemployment Challenges: Nigeria/ Trinidad and Tobago Common Grounds**

Like Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago has been dependent on crude oil exportation for sustenance of its economy. According to

the report of the World Bank (1995), both countries share a lot of similarities in the area of their economies fluctuating with rise in economic status during the period of oil boom and a fall when international oil prices drop. Both countries also share very high rates of youth unemployment, although because of the disparity in population size, Nigeria has a larger number of unemployed youths with a population of close to 201 million people as against about 1.4 million nationals of Trinidad and Tobago (Population Reference Bureau, 2019). Unemployment in both countries have led to the same kinds of crimes except for terrorism which is not found in Trinidad and Tobago.

Unlike Trinidad and Tobago, Nigeria has challenges with empowering its youths with vocations that gain their interest and provide a means of entertainment while meeting their financial expectations and also creating other investment platforms that strengthens the economy of the country (Okoli *et al.* 2016). It is important to note that the culture of entertainment, especially in the field of music is something that the youths of both countries have in common and have thrived on. This therefore denotes that entertainment, as a vocation that will generate income for Nigerian youths and the country as a whole, should be developed and promoted, just as it is in Trinidad and Tobago.

---

## **3) Nigerian Entertainment Industry: Hope for Youth Empowerment**

Ori (2014) highlights the fact that Nigeria's entertainment industry boasts of being the second highest employer of labour in the country after agriculture, and employs over one million people, mostly the youth. The industry is also the second largest in the global film market in terms of volume of production. In revenue generation, it is third



in the world behind the film industries in India and America.

In 2011, the Nigerian government injected \$200 million into the entertainment industry to finance its operations and boost its capacity to generate income. The entertainment industry which consists of film, music and comedy has an estimated annual revenue that yields \$590 million (Ori, 2014). A large number of young people in Nigeria see this industry as an easy way into a lucrative career in entertainment without necessarily gaining formal education. The government as well sees the influx of youth into the industry as a way to alleviate poverty while also contributing to the country's economy through the revenue generated from artists and the events they put up. Owing to the fact that Nigeria has over half of its population below the age of 45, this sector has taken care of a large number of unemployed youths from this demography, and have eased the burden on the government and their families, as a lot of successful young artists emerge from underprivileged backgrounds (Oduwole, 2015).

As a result of the interest this sector has generated from local and international investors, as well as the government, the entertainment industry in Nigeria appears to excel. With the government's focus on regulation and investment in this sector, the industry may enhance its youth employment efforts through domestic and regional tourism as the entertainment industry in Nigeria tends to produce dedicated entrepreneurs, cultural ambassadors, and global brands (Ori, 2014).

---

#### **4) Socioeconomic Stability through the Steelpan**

The steelpan has been a source of entertainment, education, recreation,

sports, and financial empowerment for those involved in the various vocations it produces, and for countries that promote its potentials (Olsen, 2016). It has recently been described as an economic driver, a tool for job creation, a productive user of vacant land, and a stabilizing influence in neighbourhoods threatened by all forms of crime, violence, and poverty (Campbell and Scruggs, 2015). The steelpan offers training and jobs to youths, in diverse vocations such as pan playing, pan building, pan tuning, pan case-making, fabrication of pan stands, arrangement and production of sheet music, production of souvenirs, music artistry, music production, and tutoring on the art of pan playing. While it provides recreation, it helps to engage unemployed and vulnerable youths, and capitalize on transforming the nation's cultural resources into financial resources (Aho, 1987). Countries of the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Asia and South Africa have tapped into this art form and have developed it into vocations that are transforming the lives of youths (Bishop, 2019). With Nigeria as a potential hub for the provision of knowledge and products concerning the steelpan, and taking advantage of its population and other components that create a formidable market within the African continent and beyond, the steelpan art form has huge prospects of soon becoming one of the largest income earners in Nigeria.

---

#### **5) Developing the Steelpan Art form into a Vocation in Nigeria**

The development of the steelpan art form and the various vocations established from pan have positively affected the socioeconomic structure of Trinidad and Tobago as well as other countries benefitting from participating in and promoting the art form. This is as a result of various programs and events that have evolved from the steelpan to generate

revenue for pan artisans as well as the governments involved. Vocational training centers have sprung up in various parts of the world other than Africa and various aspects of steelpan technology are taught in adult vocational training centers and in schools in Trinidad and Tobago (TTT Live online, 2019).

In Nigeria, most vocations have been in existence for too long, have saturated the market and lack the stimulus for youth interest and comprehensive development compared to the recreational vocations that the steelpan provides. This generates international opportunities for steelpan artisans without resort to external assistance from either the private sector or government. Once a steelpan artist creates an impression in the pan community, his expertise sells his/her product. Despite the great potentials of the steelpan in Nigeria, very little is known about it by Nigerians. A survey carried out for this publication reveals that out of every 50 Nigerians, one or none have heard about the steelpan (Table 1). Of all who have heard of the instrument, close to 100 percent believe that steelpan has the potential to address the problem of youth unemployment and generate revenue for Nigeria. This can be done by indorsing steelpan art as a vocation for youths from Nigeria, providing entertainment, and promoting tourism through the display of the diverse cultures in Nigeria with the pan.

---

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Nigeria has a strong youth-based Steelband culture and is one of the first countries to have adopted the instrument This began with the visit of one of Trinidad's most iconic pioneers, Winston 'Spree' Simon to Nigeria following his TASPOs performance at the Festival of Britain in 1951 (Steumpfle, 1995). 'Spree' was awarded a contract to teach and tune pans

in Nigeria and thus sowed the seeds of steelpan for the years to follow (Slater, 1986; see figures below). The country should therefore be well placed to build on this foundation for its future.

Nigeria has 36 states with the federal capital territory forming the 37<sup>th</sup>. Each of these states have a number of vocational training centers with at least one of them owned by the state government. This means that if Nigeria decides to promote the steelpan art form as a vocation, it would be easy to spread across the nation and would attract a high number of interested youths.

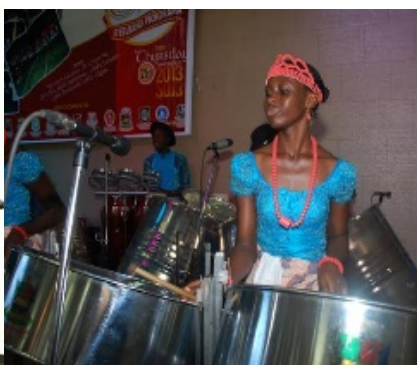
Conditions for setting up projects in Nigeria mostly depend on the cost of the project, the interest of the promoters, the interest of the beneficiaries and finally, its advantage to the beneficiaries. Past experiences in vocational training in Nigeria indicate that the promoters are mostly not concerned with who benefits and how that is achieved. Rather, they are interested in how they themselves can benefit from the establishment and operations of vocational training programs (James, 2019).

There have been a few attempts at introducing the steelpan to vocational training in Nigeria by Nigerian pan men who have tried to promote the instrument in West Africa. Because the Nigerian government is not well informed and does not provide opportunities to understand the benefits of the steelpan, no serious measure has been taken to establish pan as a vocation in Nigeria.

The Trinidad and Tobago government, as well as the governing body for pan in Trinidad and Tobago have also not made strategic efforts to promote pan in Nigeria through the right sources. From both ends, various weak efforts have been made through sources that are focused solely on financial gain, without the passion for pan.



Nigeria's number one Tenor player and Pan solo artist, John Adejumo performing at the Akwaaba African Travel Market 2019 at Eko Hotel, Lagos Nigeria



Ebiere Odiowei on the Double Tenor, performing with the winning band, Bayelsa State Junior Steelpan Orchestra at the 2013 Junior Panorama in Nigeria



Bayelsa State Junior Steelpan Orchestra, winners of the 2013 Junior Panorama on Nigeria performing their victory tune after winning. Left to right (front row): Daniel Barry (Maracas), Somme Yom (Sekere), Ebitare Dickson (Double Second), Fabby Nelson (Tenor), David Abili (Tenor), Abraham Abagus (Tenor), Kies Yom (Double Tenor), Ebiere Odiowei (Double Tenor) Visible Behind: Solomon Daniel (Cello)



ROS Teens Steelband at the 2017 International Marimba and Steelpan Festival (IMSF), Johannesburg, South Africa. Squatting left to right: John Adejumo, Favour Emmason and Victor Emmason Standing Left to right: Zino Apata, Temidayo Alegbe, Bella Emmason, Uche Amilo, Sylvia Davis



ROS Teens Steelband performing at the 2017 International Marimba and Steelpan Festival (IMSF) in Johannesburg, South Africa Standing from left to right (front): Nigeria's number one Double Tenor player, Favour Emmason, Bella Emmason (Tenor), Sylvia Davis (Tenor), and John Adejumo (Lead) Behind: Victor Emmason (Cello)

A lot of propaganda fills the internet space about the promotion of pan in Nigerian schools by a few Nigerian diplomats and Trinidadians (Clyne, 2012) whereas these pans have been in existence in those schools for some time and were established by Nigerian pan men without any input from the two governments or any association (NBF News, 2010).

To achieve positive results towards the promotion of pan in Nigeria, first, dedicated people from both countries with a passion for pan must be identified and assigned with a specific task to ensure the development and growth of pan in Nigeria, especially through vocational training and competitions. Since there are several colleges of education in Nigeria that offer music technology as a course, it will be beneficial to include steelpan technology as an area of specialization to promote in-depth understanding of the instrument and encourage its development through research. These institutions should be made available for interested students from Nigeria and other countries across Africa.

The federal government should also endorse steelpan playing in secondary schools as an extra-curricular activity, to promote the interest of young students and, also to provide the opportunity for most of them to be exposed to all the various aspects of the steelpan vocation. Because not all students who leave schools have equal opportunities to progress to universities to further their education, this will provide openings for disadvantaged students to have a trade once they leave secondary school, or gifted and interested students when they are through with their education at the university. Nigeria has a lot

of training programs that are introduced to youths in internally displaced person's (IDP) camps, returnees, migrants and youths undergoing rehabilitation programs. The government of Nigeria can take advantage of the desire by various African nations to acquire the steelpan instrument, train most of the people in these programs, especially those who have interest or experience in music and are interested in making the steelpan art a vocation for themselves. State government owned Panyards should spring up and provide all the services associated with the steelpan, to their communities and the nation at large and Steelpan recording studies should be set up to promote the production of music by artists across Nigeria with the use of the steelpans since Nigerian music is widely accepted globally.

The Niger Delta Amnesty Program has a lot of youths that are interested in developing a career in the Nigerian entertainment industry. Since there are opportunities for over six different disciplines within the steelpan vocation, these youths can be introduced to pan, and the vocation can be promoted and developed by also establishing a nationwide Steelband competition (Panorama) to attract the interest of other youths around the country and in other parts of Africa. Other events to promote the art form should include carnivals and concerts showcasing the instrument, as well as the use of the steelpan by solo players at social events. The steelpan and every field of its vocational training should also be promoted at all cultural festivals and fairs, to promote its export to other African countries for global benefits.



**Table 1. Level of knowledge of the steelpan in Nigeria, and the desire for its spread**

Location (State)	Participant Age Group	Sample Size	Responses	% Response Rate	Number With Knowledge <sup>A</sup>	Number with Positive View <sup>B</sup>
Lagos	18 – 50	60	58	96.7	1	1
Abuja	18 – 50	60	52	86.7	1	1
Cross River	20 – 60	60	56	93.3	1	1
Rivers	20 – 60	60	56	93.3	1	1
Kaduna	18 – 50	60	51	85.0	0	0
Imo	18 – 50	60	59	98.3	0	0
Akwa Ibom	18 – 60	60	58	96.7	1	0
Sokoto	22 – 50	60	51	85.0	0	0
Ogun	18 – 60	60	57	95.0	1	1
Plateau	20 – 50	60	52	86.7	0	0

<sup>A</sup> Number of participants with knowledge of the steelpan

<sup>B</sup> Number of participants that believe that investing in the steelpan can provide positive impact in Nigeria

## References

- Adams, E., Morris, P. K., Maguire, E. R., 2018. The impact of gangs on community life in Trinidad. Diagnosing and responding to violence in the Caribbean. Research Gate. doi: 10.1177/2153368718820577
- Adedokun, M. O., 2019. Effective learning skills and labour market: Implication for community development. MCSER Journal of Educational and Social Research. Retrieved from: <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/jesr/article/view/10525/10154>
- Aho, W. R., 1987. Steel band music in Trinidad and Tobago: The creation of a people's music. *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*. 8(1), 26-58. University of Texas Press. doi: 10.2307/948067
- Bishop, K., 2019. The History of the Steelpan, its impact in Hartford and the significant evolution. Trinity College, Hartford. Retrieved from: <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/795>
- Campbell, N. Scruggs, G., 2015. Healing Trinidad and Tobago's capital with steelpan music. Citylab. Retrieved from: <https://www.citylab.com/life/2015/06/steeldrum-salvation-for-port-of-spains-neighborhoods/395741/>
- Carsten, P., 2018. Nigeria's unemployment rate rises to 23.1 percent in Q3, 2018. CNBC Africa. Retrieved from: <https://www.cnbc.com/africa/news/west-africa/2018/12/20/nigerias-unemployment-rate-rises-to-23-1-percent-in-q3/>
- Clyne, K., 2012. Pan goes to schools in Nigeria. Trinidad and Tobago Guardian. Retrieved from: <https://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.417405.f2222f51cf>
- Falode, A. J., 2011. The Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970: A revolution? *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*. 5(3) 120-124. Retrieved from: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1903706](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1903706)
- James, A., 2019. Corruption charges against Amnesty boss, Charles Dokubo a disgrace to Niger Delta. Daily Post. Retrieved from: <https://dailypost.ng/2019/09/24/corruption-charges-amnesty-boss-charles-dokubo-disgrace-niger-delta-kpodoh/>
- NBF News, 2010. In Lagos, pupils cart laurels for playing steel band music. The Nigerian Voice. Retrieved from: <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/39993/in-lagos-pupils-cart-laurels-for-playing-steel-band-music.html>
- Oduwole, T. A., 2015. Youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*. 1(2), 23-39. European Centre for Research Training and Development. Retrieved from: [www.eajournals.org](http://www.eajournals.org)
- Okeke, R. C., Obiakonwamuo, O. N., Orjiakor, C. M., 2017. The elite theoretical nexus in the Nigerian national question. *Science Arena Publications Specialty Journal of Politics and Law*. 2(4), 45-51. Retrieved from: [www.sciarena.com](http://www.sciarena.com)

Okoli, N. J., Amuda-Kannike, O. M., Asuru, I. A. A., John, F. A., 2016. Politics and technical vocational education and training in Nigeria. *Merit Research Journal of Education and Review*. 4(6), 071-074. Retrieved from: <http://www.meritresearchjournals.org/er/index.htm>

Olsen, K.W., 2016. Molten steel: The sound traffic of the steelpan. Ph.D dissertation. Ohio University.

Ori, K. O., 2014. Nigeria's entertainment industry, the unsung hero of youth employment. *The Africa report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theafricareport.com/4096/nigerias-entertainment-industry-the-unsung-hero-of-youth-employment/>

Populations Reference Bureau, 2019. World population data sheet. Retrieved from: <https://www.prb.org/worldpopdata/>

Sheridan, R. B., 1985. Exploitative systems: Slavery, commerce, and industry. University of Kansas. Retrieved from: <http://kuscholarworks.ku.edu>

Slater, John, 1986. *The Advent of the Steelband and my life and times with it; 1938-1995*. (Revised edition, 1995). Pp 21- 29. Port of Spain. Litho Press Printers, Trinidad. ISBN No. 976-8157-35-6.

Steumpfle, Stephen, 1995. *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago*. Chapter 3, pp 76- 140. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Suleiman, M. N., Karim, M. A., 2015. Cycle of bad governance and corruption: The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. *SAGE Journals*. doi: 10.1177/2158244015576053

TTT Live online, 2019. Steelpan manufacturing lab at Mucurapo West secondary school. YouTube video. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/HOuAvcUVFKU>

World Bank, 1995. *Trinidad and Tobago - Poverty and unemployment in an oil based economy*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/888321468765330407/Trinidad-and-Tobago-Poverty-and-unemployment-in-an-oil-based-economy>

Zehadul Karim, A. H. M., Surajo, A. Z., 2016. Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria: A Threat to Sustainable Growth and Development. *International Journal of Scientific Research & Management Studies*. 4(11). doi: 10.18535/ijsrcm/v4i12.02

## The Memory of TASPO Lives On; Lineages of this Legendary Steelband Team up to Play on the Streets of Trinidad for Carnival 2018.

Where are the Steelbands? What is their future in carnival?

Laila M.N. Shah<sup>1,2,3</sup> and Haroun N. Shah<sup>1,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nostalgia Steelband, <sup>2</sup>Mangrove Steelband and <sup>3</sup>King's College, University of London, Franklin-Wilkins Building, London, SE1 9NH

<sup>1</sup>Nostalgia Steelband and <sup>4</sup>Middlesex University, London NW4 4BT

### Abstract

Pannists from the diaspora along with visitors from all continents flock to Trinidad and Tobago prior to carnival annually to join top steelbands in anticipation of playing at the National Panorama competition. Despite the momentum and events surrounding Panorama, very few steelbands are visible and play live during the subsequent two days of carnival when the streets of Port of Spain and San Fernando are jammed with sound systems, individual costumes, mas bands and spectators. Therefore, the musical experience of visiting steelpan players is limited to the competitive events and is further restricted if their selected band fails to qualify for the finals. Today, few steelbands are seen playing on the road during carnival, a stark contrast to the 103 bands involved in Panorama competitions. To embrace what playing in a steelband is like in Trinidad, Nostalgia Steelband of London took their own steelpans to Trinidad's carnival in 2018. The band teamed up with Southern All Stars of Claxton Bay and played together during both days of carnival on the streets of San Fernando. The experience was riveting, with packed, impenetrable, adoring crowds lining the streets and spurring on the combined band's performances through the meandering streets. The presence of a steelband on the road during carnival is hypnotising and enthralling while it personifies the street spectacle of bygone times when steelbands were engrained into the country's two-day street parades. The record of our experience documented here could be one way to allure steelbands to reinstate its former prominence as an essential component of Trinidad and Tobago's carnival.

**Key Words:** Steelpan, Street Carnival, Panorama, J'Ouvert, Trinidad Carnival, TASPO, Southern All Stars Steel Orchestra, Nostalgia Steelband

### Introduction

Steelband projects between Trinidad and Tobago and the diaspora invoke a strong sense of passion, nostalgia and poignancy. Like swallows migrating south for the winter months, pannists from the northern hemisphere navigate their way to Trinidad, taking every seat on filled aeroplanes to join others who descend upon the island prior to carnival annually. Many of the 35,000 visitors/players (CSO, 2016) don't have an ancestral link with the islands but go simply

for the yearning of pan, the deep affection and veneration they hold for the 'Land of Steelband, Calypso and Mas'. This was evidenced and movingly described in Shareen Gray's commentary "UK pan players invade Trinidad for Panorama 2018" (Gray, 2018).

Salah Wilson's states that "*...the panorama competition in Trinidad and Tobago has been the driving force for steelpan*



*innovation over the decades. It has been responsible for the steelpan development in many areas including the enhancement of the sound, new types and styles of instruments, extension of ranges, harmonic tuning, electroplating of chromed finish appearances of the instruments, mobility concepts and more. It has been responsible for the quality of musical arrangements that are now considered legendary. The panorama competition has also been one of the major economic opportunities during the carnival season. The lure of attracting foreigners and expats to Trinidad is an on-going annual trend”* (Wilson, 2019). For such reasons, pannists from around the globe regard participating at the Trinidad Panorama competition as the ultimate experience. A glance at visitors performing who can't even speak English reveals unequivocally that Panorama conjures up a feeling of euphoria, personal achievement, confidence and definitive gratification. This was eloquently expressed by two young pannists following their debut at the Notting Hill Carnival Panorama with Mangrove Steelband (Shah and Goodman, 2018).

Beyond performances at Panorama, just being present where steelpan is being played provides immeasurable magnetism among enthusiasts and provides an ambience in which many friendships are forged and experiences exchanged. Author (HNS) first met Andy Narell while sitting at the roadside canal on Tragarete Road, Woodbrook, Port of Spain at 3 am listening to 'Birdsong Steelband' rehearsing for J'Ouvert in 2013. Personal experiences were exchanged on the legendary 'Bobby' Mohammed and the bravura years of 'Guinness Cavaliers Steel Orchestra' (see Shah, 2006). Many years earlier, Narell's father took his young family to Trinidad to the Steelpan Musical Festival at Queen Hall in 1967. Narell re-counted that when he heard the mesmeric sound of this band playing highlights from the opera 'Carmen', so profound was this experience that it proved to be his epiphany. At that

very moment he knew his destiny that *“I would spend the rest of my life playing pan”*.

For carnivalists, the Christmas season serves as a springboard of the hedonistic carnival celebrations with the best known, Trinidad and Tobago's, the Mardi Gras of New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro's carnivals that precede Ash Wednesday. However, beyond these, there is ample space between many of the major carnivals that now allow carnivalists to participate in events throughout the calendar year. Toronto's Caribbean Carnival at the end of July, London's Notting Hill Carnival at the end of August and New York's Labor Day in early September are witnessing between 1-3 million participants, many of whom are roving between each event. Even within these countries, numerous carnivals are developing; the UK alone holds more than 25 carnivals annually. Pannists therefore now have the opportunity to perform at multiple events. Between Trinidad and the UK alone, these interactions are leading to more UK players joining steelbands for Panorama in Trinidad and in return, Notting Hill Carnival (NHC) now benefits from overseas players joining UK steelbands as NHC grows and gains status as a global phenomenon. But no player is guaranteed a place in a steelband upon arrival and it takes considerable determination, dedication and courage to be assimilated into a leading steelband and reach the final stages of competition.

In 2012, the experienced and highly skilled pannist from the UK, Stephon Phillip related his personal experience and aspiration to play with Amoco Renegades for Panorama 1987 (Phillip, 2012). He arrived well in advance of Panorama and practiced intensely with the band but disappointingly was not considered adequately competent to be included in the final team and was only allowed to play on the road for J'Ouvert. He repeated the experience the following year but was met

with the same fate. Undeterred, he went back for the third successive year and this time made it to the final in 1989 to at last experience this remarkable event. For Phillip, who began playing at the age of 10 and whose father was a highly proficient player, tutor, arranger and steelpan tuner, to have had to work so obsessively to achieve his goal, underscores the standard demanded by these highly proficient steelbands. In Phillip's experience, practice depended on him being at the panyard for individual tuition which was often complicated by the inability to synchronise practice times with a member of the band. However, such personal tuition is rapidly disappearing with the use of electronic communications and it is now rare for pannists to arrive for a major event without first practising the test piece ahead of joining a steelband. Arrangers such as Andre White or Duvonne Stuart often arrive in London for Notting Hill Carnival well after their steelbands, Mangrove or Ebony begin rehearsing their arrangements for Panorama. Conversely, pannists arriving in Trinidad for carnival now are better prepared than they would been a few years ago.

Panorama unquestionably lures in pannists and visitors to Trinidad but apart from sporadic glances of steelbands at J'Ouvert, rarely are these fêted orchestras visible during the remainder of carnival. Christopher Innes's (Innes, 2008; Innes *et al.* 2013) conference titled "*Carnival, 'A People's Art' and 'Taking Back the Street'*" 2008, warned of the consequences of losing this artform during this epicurean festival. Our experiment to team up with a local steelband and to "*take back the street*" is a *de novo* experiment and the basis of the present paper.



Figure 1. Practice in Claxton Bay, Trinidad incorporating the single pans of Nostalgia and multiple pans including a 5 and 6- base sets of Southern All Stars in glorious sunshine and tranquillity and surrounded by lavish green flora.

## A Novel Experiment

### I). Networking: 'Nostalgia' and 'Southern All Stars' linked by a common Lineage; A Euphoric Vision

Networking is critical to steelbands forging fruitful collaboration and gaining experience and fulfilment in playing away from their base. Here, both bands share a commonality in that they boast a direct lineage to the legendary "Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra" (TASPO), and a genuine desire to take pan into the community. TASPO was the first national steelband to leave the shores of Trinidad and did so to perform at the celebrated "Festival of Britain" in 1951<sup>1</sup> (see Felix. 1995; Stuempfle, 1995). This watershed moment for steelpan, ushered in a new era of British arts, and direct interaction between both countries. Two members of TASPO, Sterling Betancourt<sup>2</sup> (Crossfire Steelband) and Philmore 'Boots' Davidson (City Syncopators), founded Nostalgia in London in 1964, while in Trinidad, TASPO's Theophilus "Black James" Stephens<sup>3</sup> (Free French, San Fernando)

founded 'Southern All Stars Steel Orchestra' in 1953 (Shah, 2013). Our initial association was partly serendipity and a longstanding dream of Lennox "Bobby" Mohammed<sup>4</sup> to come to London for NHC but has been hindered by ill-health. In 2013, his protégé Ishmael "Luxy" Zackeralli, arranger for Southern All-Stars, began travelling to London to experience the atmosphere of NHC. A chance meeting between Luxy and the authors that year led to Luxy attending a practice session. Nostalgia was in the midst of grappling with its own arrangement of Bunji Garlin's 'Differentology'; inspired by 15-year old Laila Shah's debut visit to Trinidad's carnival in 2013 and overwhelmed by Garlin's performance. With Marvin Barbe, she arranged and won Nostalgia its first ever '*Best playing band on the road*' trophy in its 50-year history. In 2015, Luxy returned to London and his first arrangement for Nostalgia, Sparrow's "Drunk and Disorderly" saw the band win again. In 2016, the band was caught up in immense congestion and stuck between various Sound Systems on carnival Monday and reached the adjudication point too late to be considered. This was such a bitter disappointment to band members and Luxy in particular, who travelled again to London and spent all summer working intensely with Nostalgia on his arrangement of Kitchener's "Rainorama", that there was a strong feeling it would be his last visit. Unexpectedly, he returned to London in the summer of 2017 and led Nostalgia to new heights with an electrifying, intricate and sophisticated arrangement of Kitchener's classic, "Pan in A Minor". A desire for Bobby Mohammed to hear the band play this tune was the trigger for Nostalgia's debut visit to Trinidad for carnival 2018.

---

## ii). Preparations and Nostalgia's Enraptured Arrival in Trinidad

Nostalgia is a traditional "pan-around-neck band" and therefore utilises solely single pans, while Southern All-Stars is a conventional band with multiple pans. The logistics of combining both formats while practicing in two different countries presented enormous challenges and while about 60% of the musical arrangement could be worked out separately, it was vital to have a few days of joint practice in Trinidad prior to carnival (Fig. 1). Together we selected two key pieces, a calypso (Lord Kitchener's "67") for competition at J'Ouvert and a "Bomb" tune for competition on the road. For the latter, we selected Simon and Garfunkel's 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' as a poignant tribute to the victims of the tragic Grenfell Tower catastrophe that took place on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. Luxy had just arrived in London and witnessed this agonising event on the doorsteps of Nostalgia's panyard, Maxilla in North Kensington.

The band played "67" in the same key that Kitchener sang this inextirpable calypso to win the Road March in 1967, which also coincided with the year author (HNS) left Trinidad. Before setting off for Trinidad, we practiced fervently weekly/biweekly, sometimes outdoors in subzero temperatures between November 2017 to February 2018. Our steelpan cases doubled-up as suitcases and became very heavy items for travel and passage through local Customs. Nevertheless, our arrival at Piarco International Airport, Trinidad on 9<sup>th</sup> February was a long-anticipated dream but little time was wasted before our first practice commenced with Southern All Stars. Band members stayed in Couva (central Trinidad) and needed to travel to the panyard. This was located at the back of 'Union Claxton Bay Secondary School', Claxton Bay in south Trinidad, where Luxy

is an A-level teacher. Leaving the bitter winter of England and practicing under the tranquil canopy of several tall, green and elegant fruit trees in temperatures of 25 - 29°C and with such warm and welcoming host seemed surreal and almost holiday-like. However, Luxy maintains a high degree of rigor and discipline and we were soon transported back to earth and being heavily drilled. There was much to learn, particularly with “67” which Luxy crafted beautifully with a powerful melodic introduction and a bridge with several minor key changes. Soon the smiles disappeared as Nostalgia members wrestled with the new scores. We finished a very tiring day by travelling to Port of Spain in the late evening to see the world’s most spectacular and enthralling steelband competition globally, the Trinidad and Tobago Panorama. To witness this breathtaking, marathon event live is to experience one of the most astonishing musical experiences on our planet. There are small, medium and large conventional steel orchestras but it is the sheer size of the large bands, the skill and dexterity of over 120 players and the immense creativity and ingenuity of the arrangers of these iconic finalists that leaves everyone spellbound. After this epic journey into utopia, we returned to another full day’s practice in the early hours of Sunday and conducted our final practice in the presence of several



Figure 2. Some of Nostalgia’s crew after the band’s first practice in Trinidad. Band members received final instructions from bandleader, Luxy Zakerali for playing on the streets for carnival. Back row, left to right; Yvanna Barbe, Angelina Ansah, Maria Wardale, Karen Jakson, Christine Davis, Pier Reid, Haroun Shah and Laila Shah; Front row; Abby Gibb and Dominic Markes.

local and overseas visitors and received our final instructions for performing on the road (Fig. 2). See link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bROWbZM1Y5U>

### iii). Pan on the road during Carnival Monday; J’Ouvert in San Fernando and Night Mas at Carapichaima

We started our journey to J’Ouvert from Claxton Bay at 3am, using a tractor to pull the float that carried 30 players. The single pans of Nostalgia and multiple pans of Southern All Stars were interspersed on the racks while the 6- and 5-base pans, a drum set and percussion were placed in the middle of the float. The driver navigated the precarious route alongside the oil fields of Point a Pierre, along the old Southern Main Road over the Guaracara River, past Marabella then into San Fernando; turning into Hubert Rance Street, through the very steep hills and sharp corners to Vistabella Road, Quenca Street, Hollis Street and finally our starting point on Independence Avenue at 5am. The vehicle was parked alongside the San Fernando General Hospital and proceeded to the judging point at City Hall an hour later, playing our calypso piece, Lord Kitchener’s “67” for 15 minutes in front of the judges. During this very early part of the day, crowds were sparse, so it was easy to traverse the remainder of Harris Promenade, changing to our “Bomb” tune, ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water’ as we reached the east end of Coffee Street; the hub of activities between the 1960s - 1980s. We stopped and played for 10 minutes in front of 117 Coffee Street (where author HNS was born and grew up; see Martin and Funk, 2018; Fig. 3) changing back to Lord Kitchener’s “67” to mark the victories of Guinness Cavaliers<sup>4</sup> in 1965 and 1967. We continued along Coffee Street to Royal Road and Mon Repos (where Guinness Cavaliers<sup>4</sup> was based





Figure 3. The euphoria of playing for J'Ouvert on Coffee Street, San Fernando. The band paused to acknowledge the huge appreciation from onlookers and street vendors who lined both sides of the street at 7am.

throughout their proud and prosperous years) before leaving the town via the San Fernando By-Pass.

We returned to the panyard at 1pm but a fracture on the iron assembly that fastened the float to the tractor needed welding. This was promptly done and we set out again at 3pm to reach Carapichaima to perform at their night mas celebrations. Carapichaima is a small, largely East Indian town that has now become a major staging point for Carnival celebrations in Central Trinidad. Until 2003, most residents were employed by the state-owned sugar-producing company, Caroni Ltd. Its dependence on the company and eventual closure led to poverty and huge social problems. Consequently, Southern All Stars chose to support their carnival celebrations over the last few years as a means of boosting morale in this picturesque, rural town. Stage performances by artists from 3 to 93 years began at 5pm and was colourful, elaborate and engaging. Nostalgia's inclusion as part of Southern All Stars was announced and enthusiastically acknowledged by the MC. As the only steelband at the celebrations, the band was given the high spot to perform at 7.30pm for 30 minutes and received a rapturous, appreciative applause. The journey back took two hours across the dark, winding, minor roads through the old sugar belt and,

after a long tiring day we arrived at our panyard in Claxton Bay at 10pm.

#### iv). Pan on the road - Carnival Tuesday - a Momentous Experience

Our performance on Carnival Tuesday began at mid-day when the band paused on Coffee Street, between Lower Hillside and Drayton Street to play for 30 minutes (Fig. 4).

As the float pulled up, music was blaring through the sound systems of local DJs, but as soon as the bandleader signalled his intension to play, all systems were switched off and crowds gathered reverently around the float to listen. Luxy, former Hatters Steelband pannist, took over as the leader and arranger of 'Southern All Stars' 15 years ago and chose to play at this spot because it was directly opposite their original panyard, before the band relocated to Claxton Bay. The band received a tumultuous welcome and was heartily applauded during and after its performance. Feeling more confident and reassured, the band left Coffee Street and turned into the hub of activity on Cipero Street where the



Figure 4. The combined steelband playing on Carnival Tuesday in San Fernando directly opposite to the panyard where Southern All Stars was formed in 1953. A large number of carnival veterans came out to congratulate bandleader Luxy Zakerali for keeping the tradition of playing on the street for sixty-five years!

crowds and bands are now most concentrated in San Fernando.

Southern All Stars was the only steelband on the road in San Fernando and bystanders showed their appreciation in the most cordial, passionate and visible manner. People flocked on either side of the float and were dancing, smiling and singing along to the music and celebrating the band's presence as it ambled very slowly along the jam-packed street. As the large truck/sound systems encroached, police and spectators ushered the band towards the pavement and allowed the truck to pass. At one point the huge, graceful and sophisticated masqueraders of Kalicharan Carnival's "Elixir of Life" - Part 2 band came towards us and so large were their mas, that we were forced to turn off Cipero Street onto Sutton Street to allow this prodigious band to pass. We turned into Prince of Wales Street and returned to Coffee Street before restarting at the top of Cipero Street. It was now approaching 4pm and the crowds swelled to capacity with minimal space between bystanders. Our second passage along Cipero Street was met with even more fervor as more revellers joined the band and reduced its pace significantly. However, the crowds showed their appreciation even more noticeably, waving approvingly, singing along and cheering, reaching out to shake the hands of players and even passing food, drink and snacks. Never in its 50-year history and performances in various parts of the world has Nostalgia members seen a steelband so warmly embraced and expressively welcomed (Shah, L. 2018). Tired and exhausted from eight hours of almost perpetual playing, we reached near Skinner's Park at 7.30pm. We paused at the corner of Scott Street and played for a further 30 minutes to hundreds of enthusiasts before reluctantly closing for the day to begin our return journey along San Fernando By-Pass to Claxton Bay.

---

## Discussion

Following carnival, members of both bands cooled off from Ash Wednesday for 3 days at the exquisite Mayaro Beach, at the south eastern corner of Trinidad. After such a hectic period, this was an excellent sojourn to connect, relax and reflect on carnival which had an immense impact on us. Because we took our pans to the beach and played there, many holidaymakers were drawn in, the vast majority of whom came for carnival from the USA, Canada and the UK and consequently much discussion ensued.

We were told by many experts/carnivalists that this is the first time a steelband from the diaspora had teamed up with a local band to play on the streets of Trinidad during carnival. Whether history was created is inconsequential, what members of both bands were exceedingly proud of was the tremendous reception received on the road, especially on carnival Tuesday. There is widespread perception that the days of pans on the road are defunct, and steelbands have gradually given way to the overpowering Sound Systems. This has begun to permeate into carnivals in the diaspora and is highly visible at Toronto's Caribana and NHC. For example, during NHC 2018, Nostalgia was joined by pannists from various parts of the world to play on the road. Annually, the band would leave its panyard, Maxilla, Latimer Road around 11 am and play for between 8 - 10 hours each day. But in 2018, the band was subdued by the disproportionate volume of mobile Sound Systems and reduced to less than 2 hours play each day. So distraught were players that many vowed never to return and the band had only half its normal team for NHC 2019. Determined to maintain our presence during carnival, we left our panyard at 9am for carnival 2019 and while this partly resolved the problem, it prevented members who played for

J'Ouvert being able to re-join the band at the start of the second day.

We believe that there is room for both pan and mobile Sound Systems on carnival routes but if the decibel level is not regulated, more steelbands will give up and simply vanish from carnival. When discussed in Trinidad, to our utter astonishment and disbelief, many were indifferent to the decline of steelbands on the road. To emphasise this, one prominent local carnivalist stated "*I think the time has passed for pan on the road, .. end of an era*". But is this really what the public want or is it simply that the steelband players have already admitted defeat and are prepared to give up so easily? Their parents, on the other hand, poured their energy, passion, and tenacity to develop this astonishing instrument and devise methods, such as complex mobile racks to take large huge bands on the road (Aho, 1987; Dudley, 1997; Goddard, 1991; Nathanie, 2006; Thomas, 1992). Today, it is striking that Panorama is such a breathtaking spectacle that it can be seen live globally. It surely ranks as one of the largest and most powerful open music competitions in the world but the paradox is that for most, this is an anti-climax as pan is not heard again during carnival. A small number of reduced sized steelbands turn out for J'Ouvert but following this, rarely can a steelband be seen during carnival; a stark contrast to the 103 bands involved in panorama competitions. This is in direct contrast to carnivals of the 1960s when thousands of revellers could be seen cavorting along with the steelbands, singing and cheering until the closing minutes to midnight on carnival Tuesday. So engrained were the steelbands into the fabric of carnival, that all other forms of music reverently gave way to the symphonic sounds of the steelbands as carnival drew to a close at midnight on Tuesday or as Lord Kitchener so eloquently declared '*The Carnival is Over*' – see link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeNOQxNqi9Q>

Some attribute the absence of pan on the road to the vast amount of time invested in practice for Panorama leaving many players too exhausted and saturated to return to the road during carnival. However, this does not explain how some players can learn the Panorama tunes for several bands simultaneously. We should applaud the efforts of Trinidad All Stars, Harmonites and particularly Exodus and Peter Minshall's incredible mas band who combined both pan and mas at the highest level to maintain a presence during carnival. In San Fernando, Southern All Stars was the only steelband on the road during carnival and likewise its arranger, Luxy and his band should be commended for persisting in doing so for sixty-five years despite the absence of financial support (per. com.). However, the fact that three bands in Port of Spain and one in San Fernando are prepared to buck the trend is reassuring. Peter Minshall is one of the most gifted and creative artists globally and with his participation, infinite knowledge, understanding and command at the helm of carnival arts, gives hope that the tradition will not be completely lost. Likewise, Exodus (with Panorama victories in 1992, 2001, 2003 and 2004) ranks as one of the top steelbands. This formidable duo provides hope and optimism and a model for others to aspire to, while the appreciation and support witnessed in San Fernando should stimulate other steelbands to emulate Southern All Stars.

Since Panorama began in 1963, Tony Williams's 'Pan Am North Stars' set an extremely high bar and steelbands not only fiercely competed at Panorama on the eve of carnival but came out for J'Ouvert and throughout Monday and Tuesday carnival. The author vividly recalls the Panorama of 1965 when Guinness Cavaliers could have competed with one of three tunes, and finally selected 'Melody's Mas' and left an

indelible mark on Panorama some fifty years on with its harmonically fluid, dramatic key modulations and bold arrangement of a calypso that was not played by any other band (Shah, 2006, 2008). But significantly, the band was also poised to enter with Kitchener's "Hold on to you Man" or "My Pussin" both of which were released as 45s. The band won Panorama in Port of Spain for the first time and then returned to San Fernando to be given a tumultuous welcome and played on the road for J'Ouvert, later that afternoon and all Tuesday until midnight. Thus, the possible preoccupation or saturation of the pan musicians with Panorama preparations does not seem a plausible explanation.

Every event must evolve and give way to new methods and emerging interest, hence if steelband participation in carnival has reached its climax, then carnival advocates must give way to the new. But our own experience of the colossal reception we received on carnival Tuesday strongly challenges this view. Sound Systems can be found at any festival but what makes the traditional carnival so unique is its inextricable link to this remarkable instrument. Without steelpan, carnival would have lost a key component of its intrinsic heritage. When something of this magnitude is lost, rarely does it revert to its former glory. For this reason, it is important to pause and give thought to what can be done to prevent steelpan sliding out of carnival into oblivion. Evidently there are many who wish to halt this process of decline. In 2019, there were extensive open discussions in Trinidad and Tobago on how to re-introduce more pan into carnival and individuals are at last expressing their views openly. An added worrying thought is the decline of steelpan music in public in Trinibago beyond carnival. In *When Steel Talks 'Celebration of Women and the Steelpan Art Form'*, Ke Shari J'knysa Caesar (Southern Stars Steel Orchestra) refers to Panorama as a blessing but also "*a curse for musicians because sadly, it is the*

*only competition to look forward to*". When asked, "*What disappoints her the most in the steelband movement?*", she responded "*I am most disappointed that there are very few events and competitions to keep musicians excited and give them something to look forward to during the year*" (Caesar, 2018).

In the UK, carnival arts can be seen and heard throughout the year. London is privileged to have a world-class carnival arts centre, the 'Carnival Village Trust' (Tabernacle and Yaa Centre) that promotes calypso, mas and steelpan throughout the year. Calypso ('Kaiso Lime') can be heard from April to November at the Tabernacle while the UK's top steelbands, 'Ebony' and 'Mangrove' use these glorious, elegant buildings as their panyards and perform throughout the year. London pays tribute to its icons such as Russell Henderson and Cyril Khamai at this Shrine to carnival arts. The 1000 pans celebration of 2012 took place in August on the very spot where TASPO performed in 1951 and even during subzero temperatures of winter, steelbands, however small continue to promote carnival arts.

Years ago, as a youth, author HNS recalls steelbands such as Guinness Cavaliers, Desperados and others performing at Harris Promenade, San Fernando throughout the year and this had a marked effect on his interest in pan even when he left Trinidad. To his dismay, during the Christmas periods, no steelband could be seen anywhere in south Trinidad. Ke Shari J'knysa Caesar stated, "*My vision is for Trinidad & Tobago to embrace the steelpan instrument, ... make the steelpan industry become as lucrative or more so than the oil industry*" (Caesar, 2018). Perhaps the views of this extremely gifted player should be given more consideration in these islands especially in the light of the demise of Petrotrin and renewed interest to stimulate tourism.



The diaspora in the USA, Canada and the UK take their blueprint for carnival from Trinidad and Tobago where this art form was conceived, nurtured and developed against some of the most defiant obstacles. Even though great calypsos are released annually by London's ACASA (Association of Calypsonians and Soca Artistes; Spark, 2017), steelbands abroad steadfastly follow the form and pattern of development in Trinbago<sup>5</sup>. However, West Indians are now also pouring into London for NHC and indications are that they come because of its nostalgic atmosphere; steelbands are still on the road and calypso and mas are thriving. But here too there are huge obstacles to overcome, the most significant being the prohibitive cost of taking a steelband on the road. Steelbands are not sponsored in the UK and there is no remuneration for participation but our vision is that if there is real zeal, passion and commitment for these art forms, innovative methods will be found for the tradition to continue, as it has done for decades through ingenious and creative means by its forebearers.

Nostalgia's experience in Trinidad suggests that a good place to rekindle the trajectory of 'pan-on-the-road' is to start with the youth; education of the history of carnival arts and its importance in expressive culture and pivotal role in the development of the Caribbean. The youth should be in no doubt about the esteem and admiration in which they are held by the diaspora and more collaborative projects should be undertaken. The project between Southern All Stars and Nostalgia was miniscule and inconsequential but the impact was so far reaching that it became the theme for the 7<sup>th</sup> biennial steelpan conference "*Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; Celebrating Windrush 70*". This conference and the one held recently at York University between 26-28<sup>th</sup> September 2019. (Lovejoy and Shah, 2019; Martin, 2019; Shah 2019) should be used as a launchpad to drive interactions

between the diaspora and the homeland with the youth spearheading the process.

In his book, "*Steelpan Ambassadors, The US Navy Steel Band, 1957-1999*", Andrew Martin passionately captures the moment when Admiral Daniel Gallery, was invited by Dr. Eric Williams (before he became prime minister in 1962) to witness the carnival parade at Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain in 1957. Admiral Gallery was mesmerised by what he saw as steelband after steelband went by. The author states he was "*spellbound by the music and sound of the Trinidadian Steelband ... and .. bitten by the pan jumbie*" and uttered "*something just got inside me and shook me up*". This touching moment led to his obsession with steelpan and precipitously to the formation the legendary "US Navy Steel Band" and arguably the birth and meteoric rise of steelbands at colleges and universities across the USA. This experience of Admiral Gallery in 1957 is relevant today and indisputably states the case to retain the presence of these remarkable instruments on the road as an integral part of carnival but also to entice a future Admiral Gallery to take steelbands further afield.

---

### Acknowledgement

The authors wish to acknowledge the support of members of Nostalgia Steelband who gave up considerable time to make this experience possible. Members of Nostalgia in turn are indebted to Ishmael "Luxy" Zackerali, arranger for Southern All-Stars who also arranged for Nostalgia Steelband for five successive years in London for NHC between 2014-2019. The combined band also wish to thank Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed for his support and encouragement while in Trinidad, and also Jimi Phillip, steelpan tuner, for coming to the band's practice at Claxton Bay prior to carnival to ensure that the pans were tuned after travel from the UK. Finally, our warm thanks to Luxy's wife, Jenny (5-base

player), their son, Joe, Luxy's brother, Renzie (double tenor and arranger) and their entire family and band members of

Southern All-Stars who hosted Nostalgia steelband during their stay in Trinidad.

---

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup>TASPO members left Trinidad on 6 July 1951 for England on the SS *San Mateo*. The steelband performed at the South Bank, London, on 26 July 1951, as well as elsewhere in Britain and in Paris. See <http://www.seetobago.org/trinidad/pan/history/bandhist/taspo/dbtaspo.htm>)

<sup>2</sup>All TASPO members, except Sterling Betancourt, returned to Trinidad in December 1951. Betancourt, with Russell Henderson were pivotal to the start of Notting Hill Carnival and the founding of Nostalgia Steelband.

<sup>3</sup>When Theophilus Stevens returned to Trinidad with TASPO, a year later he first founded 'Metronomes Steelband' and in 1953 'Southern All Stars' at 'Les Efforts', San Fernando. Filled with inspiration from his tour with TASPO, he entered 'Southern All Stars' for the island-wide 'Music Festival 1954' and came first with their interpretation of 'Anna'.

<sup>4</sup>Guinness Cavaliers was founded on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1961 in San Fernando by Lennox "Bobby" Mohammed, one of Trinidad's most brilliant, gifted and propitious steelband leaders and arrangers. In just 4 years he established supremacy in the world of pan by not only winning the National Panorama but unveiling the new sound of the "Big Band". The legendary Guinness Cavaliers won the nations most cherished prize, Panorama in 1965, came 2<sup>nd</sup> in 1966 and 1<sup>st</sup> again in 1967- when the author departed for England to further his studies.

<sup>5</sup>The exception was 1999 when three steelbands, Nostalgia, Eclipse and Mangrove played a calypso from the London Calypso Tent by Mighty Tiger (see 'Calypso in London, 25 Years of the London Calypso Tent', Stephen Spark, 2017, pp 17. Trafton Publishing. Email: [britishcalypsonians@gmail.com](mailto:britishcalypsonians@gmail.com). Recently, 'St Michaels and All Angels Steelband' began playing local calypsos such as Alexander D Great's compositions, 'Tribute to Russell Henderson' and 'Unsung Heroes'.

---

## References

- Aho, William R., 1987. Steel Band Music in Trinidad and Tobago: The Creation of a People's Music, *Latin American Music Review* 8; 26–56. University of Texas Press, doi: 10.2307/948067
- Caesar, Ke Shari J'knysa, 2018. 'Celebration of Women and the Steelpan Art Form', "When Steel Talks" (March 27, 2018) <https://www.panonthenet.com/woman/2018/keshari-jknysa-caesar.htm>.
- Central Statistical Office, CSO. 2016. National Carnival Commission of Trinidad & Tobago; Carnival Business Links Volume 2 Issue 3. August 2016.
- Dudley, Shannon K., 1997. Making music for the Nation: Competing identities and Esthetics in Trinidad and Tobago's Panorama Steelband Competition. PhD dissertation; University of California Berkeley.
- Felix I. R. Blake, 1995. The Trinidad and Tobago Steel Pan. History and Evolution. ISBN 0-9525528-0-9
- Goddard, George, 1991. Forty Years in the Steelbands: 1939 - 1979. Karia Press, London. ISBN 1 85465 034 3 Pb
- Gray, Shareen, 2018. "UK pan players invade Trinidad for Panorama 2018" (SOCANEWS, 18th March 2018). <https://socanews.com/news/review/uk-pan-players-invade-trinidad-for-panorama-2018>.
- Innes, Christopher, 2008. Proceedings of the International Conference: "*Carnival, 'A People's Art' and 'Taking Back the Street'*". Venue: York University, Canada, 31<sup>st</sup> July - 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2008.
- Innes, Christopher, 2013. Carnival: Theory and Practice, Ed. C. Innes. A. Rutherford, B. Bogar. Africa World Press, Trenton, New Jersey 08638. pp IX -XIII.
- Nathanie, Daina Lorraine, 2006. Finding an 'Equal' Place: How the Designation of the Steelpan as the National Instrument Heightened Identity Relations in Trinidad and Tobago. The Florida State University.
- Lovejoy, Paul, Shah, Haroun N., 2019. Proceedings of the Conference "*Calypso, Carnival, Steel Band: Expressive Cultures of the Caribbean Diaspora*", Founders College, York University, Canada, September 26-28, 2019.
- Martin, Andrew, 2019. Toronto conference celebrates the international connections of carnival arts. Trinidad Guardian, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019.
- Martin, Andrew, Funk, Ray, 2018. Reconnecting with Roots: UK Steelband plays Carnival in San Fernando", Trinidad Guardian, March 20, 2018.

Martin, Andrew R., 2017. 'From Trash Can to US Navy Steel Band', In: Steelpan Ambassadors, The US Navy Steel Band, 1957-1999. Chapter One. pp. 27-54. University Press of Mississippi/Jackson.

Nathanie, Lorraine D., 2006. "Finding an 'Equal' place: How the designation of the steelpan as the national instrument heightened identity relations in Trinidad and Tobago", The Florida State University, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

Phillip. Stephon, 2012. Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Steelpan Conference "*From Empire Windrush to the London 2012 Olympics; An Epic Journey for Steelpan, Calypso and Carnival*", University of East London, Stratford Campus, London. Title: 'Bridging the gap between steelbands; UK, Trinidad, New York and London 2012 Olympics. 26-28<sup>th</sup> October 2012, pp 23.

Shah, Haroun N., 2006. Trinidad in the 1960s: Transformation to the Big Band – Profile of Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed's Guinness Cavaliers Steel Orchestra. Proceedings of the First Steelband Conference, pp10. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/>

Shah, Haroun, 2008. Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed and Guinness Cavaliers. Pan Podium. Issue 16, pp16 -17.

Shah, Haroun N., Loewenthal, Alexander, 2019. Calypso, Carnival, Steelband: Expressive Cultures of the Caribbean Diaspora. In 'Pan Podium' Nov. 2019

Shah, Haroun N., 2013. Nostalgia Steelband and the Impact of "Pan-Round-Neck" at Street Carnivals in Europe. In. Carnival: Theory & Practice, Ed. C. Innes. A. Rutherford, B. Bogar. Africa World Press, Trenton, New Jersey 08638. pp 233 - 248.

Shah, Laila M.N., 2018. Playing pan on the streets of Trinidad for carnival 2018; a moment of sheer ecstasy and unwitting historical creation. In: Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial steelpan conference; "*Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; 'Celebrating Windrush 70'*". 19-21<sup>st</sup> October 2018, pp 36. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/>

Shah, Laila M.N., Goodman, A., 2018. 'Debut at Panorama 2018; Experience of two students in the shadow of the dreaded 'red-highlighter' In: Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial steelpan conference; "*Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; 'Celebrating Windrush 70'*". 19-21<sup>st</sup> October 2018. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/>

Stuempfle, Stephen, 1995. The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Thomas, Jeffrey, 1992. Forty Years of Steel: An Annotated Discography of Steelband and Pan Recordings, 1951–1991. Connecticut, USA: Greenwood Press.

Wilson, Salah, 2019. In: Proceedings of the conference "*Calypso, Carnival, Steel Band: Expressive Cultures of the Caribbean Diaspora*", Founders College, York University, Canada, Title: 'The Panorama Competition in Canada: A Path for Steelpan Development'. September 26-28, 2019.



## Cultural Pluralism in the Steelband Movement of Trinidad and Tobago; East Indian Involvement in Steelband

**Nestor Sullivan**

Founding Member, Former Manager, Pamberi Steel Orchestra (1980 - 2010)

Vice President - Pan Trinbago (1979 - 1995)

Operations Manager - Trinidad o National Orchestra (TTNSO) (2001 - 2010)

### Abstract

The ‘discovery’ and colonisation of Trinidad and Tobago (TT) by Europeans during the fifteenth century, enslavement of Africans, followed by indentureship of East Indians, Chinese, and other minorities led to a mosaic of fragmented, polarised communities. Over the next century, carnival, an opportunity to express ‘*ridicule and derision of the pretensions*’ (Minshall, 1985), would markedly inspire the expressive cultures of the country and help to unify communities. Driven initially by the rhythmic chants of satirical calypso in mas bands and propelled by skin drums, early carnivals appealed to the lower socioeconomic classes. Soon, even religious festivals such as Hosay, inadvertently broadened its focus to a ‘carnival-like parade’. Many non-Muslims also participated in such processions which were accompanied by Tassa bands. There is now considerable evidence to show that this cross-fertilisation of practice and ideas, particularly during the 1940-50s would expedite the development of steelpan (Simmonds, 1959). The author was a passionate follower of the St James Hosay parades, who equally engaged with steelpan. The powerful rhythms of Tassa has also influenced some of Trinidad’s most distinguished pioneers such as Len ‘Boogsie’ Sharpe and Pelham Goddard. Such festivals were the breeding ground for a host of East Indians and mixed-race people, including the nation’s leading innovators such as Jit Samaroo, Lennox ‘Bobby’ Mohammed, and Anthony Williams, together with Steve Achiba, Dudley Dickson, Angus Lalsingh, Cyril Khamai, Roland Harrigin, Amin Mohammed, Ainsworth, Mohammed, Lester Mohammed, Selwyn Mohammed, Zaid ‘Tosca’ Mohammed, Dudley Rouffe, Ishmael ‘Luxy’ Zackerali, Renzie Zackerali and other prominent players to take up pioneering roles in the development of the Steelband movement. This paper is based upon a lifelong experience in the Steelband community and particularly the involvement of East Indians in its development. It is a summary of discussions and meetings the author has had with numerous pioneers and practitioners over the years and was presented at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, USA (1997) and the University of the West Indies, St Augustine (2017).

**Key Words:** Steelpan, East Indian Pan Players, Canboulay Carnivals, Guinness Cavaliers Steel Orchestra, Renegades Steel Orchestra, Hosay Festival, Cultural Pluralism, Emancipation, Indentured Labourers.

### Introduction

“Carnival, Calypso, and Steelband, known around world, have put the nation of Trinidad and Tobago on the map in the field of music. Few countries as small as this one

has given the world so many internationally recognized cultural expressions. Yet, until recently, many Trinidadians did not appreciate their creative products” (Brown, 1990).

Calypso and carnival had a long gruelling period of over a century to evolve into its present form and laid the foundations for new forms of percussive instruments to support them. Following Tamboo Bamboo and the Kalinda Bands, steelpan took barely a decade of concerted and innovative work to mature before ensembles began to perform in public and broadcast this novel invention to the world (Stuempfle, 1995). The Steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) was created and developed in communities where the majority of the population was of African and Indian descent. These are the persons who occupied the lower strata of the society which was designed and organised to serve the interests of the colonial rulers, consisting mainly of Europeans from Spain, France and England. This paper examines the historical context of these social changes in a plural community and the role of the Steelband in the lives of the citizens. It begins with reference to the work of the late Ian ‘Teddy’ Belgrave (2011) who was a founding member of Trinidad’s ‘Movement for Social Justice’, a party whose core principle was to protect the rights of the country’s labour force which comprised of the majority of the steelpan community. Belgrave stated: *“The Mass Movement is the term used to describe the political activity and self-organisation of the lower strata of society. They engage in these activities so as to advance their: Social; Economic; Political and Cultural Interests. The Mass Movement of the labouring class of Trinidad and Tobago had its genesis in the theatre of the slave plantation. It began soon after the Cedula for Population of 1783”*.

The ‘Cedulas de Población’ referred to by Belgrave (2011) was introduced in 1783 by the King of Spain to attract planters from other Caribbean islands to come and set up plantations in TT. This was in response to a request by the French planter, Roume de St Laurent, who visited the island and made recommendations for planters to come with

their enslaved Africans to TT. Immigrants started to arrive into Puerto d’Espana “Port of Spain”, driven from their estates in islands such as Grenada, Martinique and Guadeloupe by the turbulent times following the conquest by Britain (Hill,1993). By 1787 the French and Spanish Plantocracy grew from 106 to 2400 and enslaved Africans from 300 to 10,000. Six hundred new plantations that produced sugar, coffee, tobacco and cotton emerged on the island of Trinidad. For the Plantation System to survive, a new labour force was required. After other experiments were tried and failed, on the 18th February 1797, Spanish rule ceased and the last Governor, Jose Maria Chacon, handed over the unprotected island to the British through a renunciation signed at Valsayn Estate. By the early 1800s, Spanish officials, troops and other colonists began to migrate, The Abolition of Slavery came into being in 1834, but only slaves below the age of six years old were freed. Those above were re-designated as “apprentices” and had to wait a further four years for full emancipation (Hill,1993). The British colonisers turned to another outpost of its empire, India, to boost the labour force for the plantations.

Under a system of indentureship which began in 1845 in TT, the slave labour was replaced by East Indian indentured labour, vastly altering the country’s demographics (Stefano, 1996). This policy was not unique to TT; hundreds of thousands of indentured Indian immigrants were also dispatched to Fiji, Malaysia, Mauritius, Indonesia, Guyana and Suriname and smaller numbers to Guadeloupe (23,168), Jamaica (20,736), Martinique (15,000), St. Lucia (5,000) and even less to Cuba, St. Vincent, Belize and Grenada. The total Indian indentured labour programme resulted in approximately 1,194,957 relocated to 19 colonies throughout the world. East Indians of TT, Guyana and Suriname comprised roughly 40%, 50% and 37% of their total populations respectively (Gooptar, 2020).

(In the 2011 TT census, the major ethnic groups were East Indian, 35.4%, African, 34.2%, mixed, 15.3%, Douglas [mixed African/India, 7.7%], Central Statistical Office, 2011). The remainder of the population were descendants from Europe and Asia. Stefano (1996), breaks down the numbers as two and half thousand Chinese, a thousand Portuguese, a thousand Syrians and Lebanese and 144,000 East Indians who made the journey to Trinidad in the post-emancipation era. This system continued until 1917 during which time the labourers had an option to return home but only a minority applied to do so (Ozuzu, 2012).

The policies of the colonial authorities towards the Africans' celebrations of Canboulay in the post-emancipation era was one of suppression. In spite of this, the festival grew in popularity compared to the French pre-Lenten Festival of Mardi Gras which excluded Africans. On the other hand, the policy of the colonials towards the East Indians was one of marginalisation, to keep this new workforce isolated in the barrack tenements of the plantations. Some laws included: vagrancy, habitual idlers, ticket to leave, identification passbook and certificate of discharge. The East Indian workers had to carry these in person at all times or face jail or fines.

Despite these policies, by 1850 East Indians were participating in the Canboulay celebrations in Tacarigua while African drummers were also playing in Hosay Festivals. There were also representations of the Hosay Festival in the Canboulay Carnivals of 1879 and 1880. The Canboulay Riots of 1881 were the response of the ex-slaves to suppression of their culture and was replicated by East Indians in the Hosay Riots of 1884. The Canboulay Riots took place in Port of Spain while the Hosay Riots occurred in the southern city of San Fernando (Cowley, 2008).

These developments signalled the birth of the mass movement in Trinidad where the African and East Indian workers challenged the colonial authorities in the interest of their cultural expressions.

The Hosay Festival (Chitwood, 2018; Virtual Museum of TT, 2012):

In 1884 the colonial authorities produced regulations to govern this event that dictated the following:

- (i) Only East Indians could participate
- (ii) Licenses given only to Muslim headmen
- (iii) The Festival to be restricted to the individual estates

However, the celebrants defied these regulations which forbade the holding of the Festival in the city of San Fernando.

The Coroner's Inquest revealed the following:

- 9,000 free and indentured East Indians approached San Fernando simultaneously at its three major entry points: Les Efforts, Mon Repos and Point-a-Pierre Road, in military style.
- The women and children were left behind.
- The strongest men in front were armed with an array of weapons which included: cutlasses, swords and hackia sticks with brass rings and nails.
- They were supported, encouraged and joined by the Africans who were out on the streets ready to meet the East Indian labourers
- The East Indian labourers were met by the military might of the colonial state and twenty-two died and more than one hundred were wounded.

This action carried out by the colonial forces against the East Indian labourers was more aggressive than that against the Africans in the Canboulay Riots of 1881.

The issue in both instances was the right to self-expression, however, *“the real fear of the colonial rulers was joint insurrection by the African and Indian labourers on the island”* (Cowley, 2008). As early as 1847 an overseer was attacked on a plantation; in 1849 there was a nation-wide challenge to colonial rule that introduced and sustained this exploitation. In 1882 there were strikes on plantations in Naparima and El Socorro while in 1890 there was a major strike on Golconda Estate (Perry, 1969). Hugh (1982), described indentureship as a “new system of slavery” that was fuelling discontent. Despite these disturbances, these workers continued to function in the sugar and later on in the oil industries that were the foundation of the country’s economy. In the meantime, the traditions of Canboulay and Hosay continued to develop in communities across the country. The African drum, already banned in 1884, was replaced by the Tamboo Bamboo to accompany the Canboulay Carnival Parades around the turn of the century (Cowley, 2008).

The 1930’s saw the emergence of the British Empire Workers and Home Rule Party led by Tubal Uriah Butler (Teelucksingh, 2016, National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago). This party advanced the interests of both the African and Indian workers in the sugar and oil industries where they laboured. The leadership of this party included: Krishna Deonarine (Cola Reinzie), Mitra and Ashford Sinanan, Stephen and Chanka Maraj, APT James of Tobago and Pope McLean. This led up to the implementation of the ‘Universal Adult Suffrage’ in 1946 (Clarke, 1986) which allowed every man and woman over the age of 21 to vote. This was also the era of transition; the kalinda bands of carnival moved away from bamboo to metallic products which included the use of vehicle brake drums, trash cans, paint cans to the larger biscuit tins and caustic soda drums. Soon a few musical notes were imprinted on the larger tins and this fuelled great

excitement. Gradually these tins were replaced by oil drums, whose larger surfaces permitted more notes and were more durable. These new rhythm bands were more audible and laid the foundation for the development of the Steelband (Steumpfle, 1995).

Consensus today is that the development of these percussion bands that followed was a sporadic process that took place in many parts of Trinidad’s plural society by individuals who had no idea of the magnitude of their innovations nor where this would lead. Carnival had been banned during World War II (1939 – 1945) but living legends such Sterling Betancourt and Cyril Khamai (Nostalgia Steelband, UK) recall that during this period the transformation of steelpan was intense, as experimental work on oil drums took place in the back gardens and pan yards by pannists and fledgling steelbands. This was vividly narrated by pannist John Slater who described annual attempts to take steelbands on the road for carnival but was met with the might of police and dozens of arrests and imprisonments occurred during the years of the carnival ban (Slater, 1986)

When at last the war ended and V-E (Victory in Europe Day, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945) and V-J (Victory over Japan Day, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945) declared, the government granted a two-day temporary lift on banned processions. People from all corners of society poured onto the streets by the thousands, taking anything appropriate to wave and celebrate; some took their steelpans and sang and danced in jubilation. This inadvertently turned the celebrations into a carnival which euphoric revellers, who were banned for years, shrewdly reinstated carnival. Costumes were brought out and for two days, fledgling steelpans could play simple nursery rhymes and the choruses of a few calypsos to the accompaniment of anything metallic. In San Fernando and Princes Town, individuals recalled seeing bands with



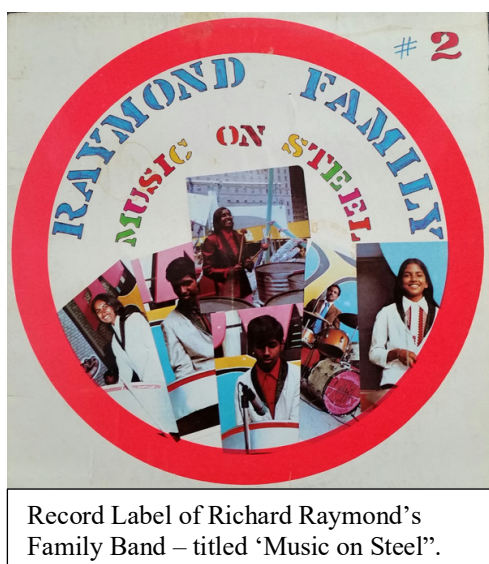
steelpan and Tassa drums (Khamai, per.com). By the end of the celebrations, pannists noted that there was a distinct preference for discarded car brake drums which later became the bedrock of the modern Steelband's "Engine Room". When the first carnival after the war was held in 1946, the steelpan, in just one year, was miraculously transformed into a more mature instrument, fully chromatic, with pannists now being able to play calypsos, hymns and popular tunes which hypnotised onlookers. Importantly, Stuempfle (1995) states by V-E and V-J, "*Steelbands were already prominent in locations as far apart as Cedros, San Fernando, Princes Town, Chaguanas and Sangre Grande*". New advances in pan tuning were taking place in all parts of the island, many in areas such as San Fernando that was largely populated by East Indians (Cyril Khamai, per.com.). Stuempfle (1995) further states that V-E and V-J "*were also important because they reaffirmed and expanded the cultural connection between street celebration and Steelband performance. Pan emerged as a form of Carnival music, but it soon became expected at festive occasions*". Prominent artists such as Beryl McBurnie began to showcase the Steelband and in 1948 when she opened the Little Carib Theatre to promote ethnic music and dance, she invited the Press, church leaders, academics and senior government officials, (Brown, 1990). With confidence growing and local attitudes changing, the 1950s ushered in the decade of the Steelband and the rise of the Steelband movement.

---

### **The Rise of the Steelband Movement; Pannists of East Indian Ancestry**

*"In 1950 the first national Steelband competition was held at the prestigious Trinidad Turf Club. The Casablanca Steelband performed last and was well received when it played 'The Bells of St.*

*Mary's*", (from an American drama film), *Chopin's 'Nocturne in E-Flat.'*", *Still, some were amazed that illiterate musicians could perform this music. Steelband was being judged not by the standards of the African working class, but by those of the white ruling class and the coloured middle class. Significantly, Casablanca's members were of African, Indian, and Venezuelan descent - a section of the Trinidadian nation, struggling for recognition through Steelband.*" Brown (1990). The reinstatement of carnival after the war and the new improved status enjoyed by steelbands brought new problems. While there was considerable development and passion, there was now noticeable rivalry among some steelbands. Violence increased as steelbands competed fiercely for superiority, particularly during carnival. It was not unusual to see steelbands' members physically attacking each other and destroying their pans. The youths were now taking an interest in pan but were terrified by these incidents. In 1948 the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Council approached the government to seek a solution. Chaired by Canon Farquhar, it led to the formation of the Trinidad Tobago Steelbandmen's Association, a watershed moment in the development of pan. The benefits of this formal recognition were immeasurable (see Brown, 1990; Dudley, 2007; Stuempfle, 1995) and gave thrust to a general shift in attitude towards TT's expressive cultures. Many white and middle-class college boys began to form their own steelbands. DeLamater (2011) states that "*The involvement of Indian youth in the college bands encouraged younger Indians who were interested in the instrument*". In the latter half of the 1950s there were some 'Indian Steelbands' such as the Saraswatie Steel Orchestra led by Asgarali Mohammed (1960) who arranged a repertoire of Indian music and played at Indian weddings (DeLamater, 2011) and the Pasea East Indian Steelband in Tunapuna in 1956.



Finding information specifically on the involvement of East Indian's lineages in the Steelband movement rest largely on extracting information from the names of individuals. In countries such as Jamaica, Cuba, Guadeloupe, St Vincent and St. Lucia, East Indians were in the minority following indentureship and lost several facets of their culture including their names (Primnath, 2020). By contrast, Trinidad's East Indian population was substantial and retained many aspects of their culture including their music which later facilitated interaction with African communities. They also held steadfastly to their names against considerable pressure, particularly in schools where children were persuaded to use Christian or English nicknames and proselytization attempted (per. com). Many anglicised their first names when they converted to Christianity as in the case of Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed of Guinness Cavaliers or Steve Achaiba of Hatters Steel Orchestra (see below). For those who additionally acquired Christian surnames, deducing their ethnicity depended on direct observation. Thus, the ethnicity of the highly versatile Raymond family of the 1960s whose names were Richard, Carol, Cinda, Cyril, Marlene and Ren Raymond are not obvious (figure above). They were an immensely versatile, professional group

who were often introduced as innovators of Steelband/Bollywood music and hugely influenced the music of TT on the Indian subcontinent. They were among the first groups to directly introduce cultural hybridization.

Jeffery Thomas (1992) published a comprehensive audiographic discography of steelbands over forty years and describes 776 commercially released examples of cassettes and compact discs of music involving tuned percussive instruments which were developed in TT between the 1930s - 1940s. It bears a meticulous chronology of musical recordings in the Caribbean and a concise organological history of steelbands. However, in its many indexes which are expertly cross-referenced, it captures only a few East Indian names in the Steelband movement and miscegenation would have been impossible to deduce. Over the years, the author has met numerous players of East Indian origin or mixed African/Indian decent ('Dougla') whose ethnicity would not be identifiable from their names. Interviews in London between 2006 – 2019 with veteran steelpan pioneer, Cyril Khamai (a dougla who was nicknamed 'Dougla'), strongly corroborates with his experiences in San Fernando and south Trinidad where developments in steelpan were on par with those in Port of Spain during the 1940s-1950s.

The post war era therefore witnessed the development of the Steelband across communities in Trinidad. There were people of African and Indian ancestry who were involved in these orchestras that became institutions in their communities. There are specific areas where these nationals constructed their identities in the Steelband. Among these are: Tuners – making the instrument; Arrangers - preparing and teaching the music to be performed; Players – persons who performed the music on the Steelband instruments and helped drive its

development. Many exhibited a high degree of Musicianship, Leadership and Administrative skills. Some of these individuals are highlighted below in the context of these qualities.

### 1) Instrumentation



In communities such as San Juan, Tunapuna, St James and San Fernando, Princes Town and the deep south to Cedros, there were many people of African and Indian descent residing there who were crucial protagonists in the development of steelpan. As noted above, miscegenation between the two major races led to offspring, who in TT are designated 'Douglas'. One was **Anthony Williams** (above) who is considered a musical prodigy and whose input into the development of steelpan is monumental. He grew up in Nepal Street, St James where Hosay celebrations predominated in Trinidad and which greatly stimulated his interest in percussion (per. com.). At a time when involvement with a steelpan was sternly discouraged and banned entirely during World War II, in 1943, Williams at the tender age of 12 was already playing with Harlem Nightingale Steelband, having had his initiation with the Steelband, "Five Graves to Cairo", St. James. With a group of teenagers, they then formed Sun Valleyians Steelband (later, Sun Valley Steel Orchestra) in which he was the lead 'Ping Pong' player. Williams was part of the legendary Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO), who participated in the 1951 'Festival of Britain' in London. This was a poignant moment for steelpan and is regarded by many pannists as the catalyst for critical innovations in

Steelband and as a platform to showcase it to the world. Williams is known globally as a 'Steelpan Scientist' for his numerous ground-breaking inventions but particularly for his creation of the modern layout of notes on a tenor pan, in the now conventional circle of fourths and fifths which he named the 'Spider Web Pan'. He was the bandleader, pan-tuner and arranger of the illustrious 'Pan Am North Stars', winning the first and second Panorama competitions in 1963 and 1964 (Table 1) and second place in 1965. He excelled at the Steelband Music Festivals taking first place in 1962 with Johann Strauss's "Voices of Spring" and repeating it again in 1966 with Franz Von Suppe's "Poets and Peasants". His name is synonymous with the development of steelpan and he received the two highest accolades of the land; the Chaconia Gold Medal (1992) and the National Award of Trinidad and Tobago Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in 2008 (Stuempfle, 1995). He was awarded a long overdue Honorary Doctorate by the University of the West Indies in October 2016.

Another example of a prominent pioneer is the master tuner and inventor, **Roland Harrigin**. As a youth, Harrigin, the son of East Indian/African parents, developed his skills playing pan with City Syncopators Steelband, Port of Spain. He has been tuning professionally for over 30 years and in addition to the high recognition afforded to him in Trinidad, Harrigin has received international acclaim in the USA, Canada and England. He is particularly revered in the USA where he tuned for New York's powerhouse Pantonic Steel Orchestra who won the steelpan championships five times between 1999 - 2005. He invented an extended limited-edition tenor pan with 3 octaves beginning at A' below 'Middle C' for the US company Panyard Inc., that is now being used by such icons as Len "Boogsie" Sharpe in Phase II Pan Groove (Joseph 1992).



**Dudley Dickson** of East Indian parentage has been a *tour de force* as a steelpan tuner and innovator globally. From humble beginnings in Grenada where he had a keen interest in pan but was snubbed, he had to wait until he migrated to England to fulfil his dreams. Invited by Trinidadian Roy Jacobs to join the Birmingham All Stars Steelband, his talents were immediately spotted by another Trinidadian veteran pannist, Victor Phillip who founded Phase One in 1978. Dudley then moved to Tropicans Harmony Steelband which was also led by Victor Phillips. His career mushroomed following his move to London, under the apprenticeship of Biggs Yearwood, one of the best-known tuners in the UK. He returned to the city of Coventry to work under Victor Phillips as a facilitator for a training workshop. This was a springboard for his career as it enabled him to be involved in all aspects of pan making; sinking, grooving, cutting and burning. He returned to London in 1982, established him as a professional pan tuner and innovator. His first of many inventions was the collapsible folding stand that is now used world-wide. Others include his collapsible stage, several new steelpanns and accessories such as the “Voom Box” used by Phase II Pan Groove. As a tuner, Dudley’s workmanship has been pivotal to the success of number of bands around the world including the UK’s, London All Stars, Mangrove Steelband, Caribbean



Cyril Khamai, playing pan at his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday party at London’s Carnival Village (Tabernacle, 2017)

Steel International, Ebony Steelband, Panch (Switzerland), Phase II Pan Grove (Trinidad) and Halcyon (Antigua).

**Cyril Khamai** (aka ‘Dougla’) is one of the unsung heroes of steelpan. At the start of World War II, he, like many others in San Fernando, began experimenting during the shutdown, but was on the road again playing steelpan in 1945 when restriction ended; he was only 14 years old! Although his father spoke mainly Hindi, he supported Khamai’s love of pan and at the tender age of only 6, his birthday present was a large tin which he began tuning. His humble and unpretentious manner has unfortunately left many of his monumental contributions to the development of this instrument largely untold. Discussions between Haroun Shah (Nostalgia Steelband) and myself from conferences (2006 - 2018) are enabling aspects of his career to unfold (Martin, 2013; Funk, 2013; Spark, 2018). Khamai is one of the most recognisable figures at London’s 55-year-old Notting Hill Carnival; he now plays a scratcher with all steelbands during the street parades. London proudly celebrated his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday (13<sup>th</sup> December) in an evening titled “*Nice One Cyril*” on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2018 (see figure left) when his peers from Trinidad, North America and Europe sent in snippets of his extraordinary life in pan as a tuner, performer and ambassador for the instrument. He remains one of the unacknowledged steelpan protagonists from San Fernando who matched and surpassed many of his peers who were experimenting in pan in Port of Spain in the 1940-50s. Just after the war, he was recruited to play and tune by Theophilus Stephens, leader of Free French Steelband, Coffee Street, San Fernando (also TASPO member) but Khamai was a covert critique of the limited notes on pans and the lack of progress. He soon accepted an offer to tune for another band on Coffee Street, Melody Makers and it was here that his virtuosity was unleashed as he mesmerised his peers. He had an unlimited supply of drums to



experiment with and by 1949, he already had a fully chromatic pan with 23 notes! Cyril recalls that when Ellie Mannette visited San Fernando to fundraise for TASPO's imminent trip to the UK, he was taken to Melody Makers panyard to see Khamai's pans. Mannette, whose pan had only 14 notes was astonished and tapped him on his back and uttered, "there is nothing we can teach you man, you are so far ahead of us in the north". Trinidad's well-known Brass Band leader and arranger, Watty Watkins (remembered for his 1950s recording of the 'Hanging Tree') who played music all over Trinidad and often with a Steelband, commented then that Khamai's tenor pan was the first fully chromatic pan he had seen anywhere in Trinidad. This example alone indicates how much of the early history of steelpan remains uncharted. Today, at the age of 89, Khamai is still a keen member of Nostalgia Steelband, is still doing gigs to promote the music on the instrument he so dearly loves, which he helped develop in Trinidad, brought to the UK in 1957 and took to 35 counties around the globe, including even the 'Iron Curtain' during the years of the 'Cold War' when travel was severely restricted. For his 86<sup>th</sup> birthday, his late, 90-year-old sister who kept his diary, baked and decorated his cake with 35 flags, one for each of the counties where he proudly took his pan to perform (see Spark, 2018). Even during the Coronavirus 2020 lockdown in England (March to May), Khamai played his double tenor pan with members of Nostalgia Steelband outside his front door for his neighbours and friends.

---

## 2) Musicianship

Armed with just an acute ear, none or just rudimentary knowledge of music, a deep love for music and art, a burning desire to invent, incessant energy to methodically experiment with meticulous scientific precision, early pan pioneers persevered

relentlessly to craft a new instrument that could accompany them during Carnival. When at last they performed to an astonished public on V-E Day in 1945, they must have felt a real sense of achievement and pride. With such determination and drive it is hardly surprising that such a high-level of musicianship was rapidly attained by a large cross-section of the grassroots communities, among them several of East Indian decent.



The Steelband Panorama Competition which began in 1963, proved a fruitful ground to dazzle the audience with their superb musicianship and soon became the ultimate destiny for all steelbands. Anthony Williams' Pan Am North Stars Steelband had already set the bar very high through public performances, splendid recordings and a strong fan base, hence it was no surprise that he won the Panorama competition in 1963 and 1964 (Table 1). During this new era of the Steelband, all potential winners were from the capital and the north of Trinidad. So overwhelming was the dominance of the north that when the first Steelband from San Fernando was about to play at the semi-final in 1965 the audience began leaving for home. This was a week before the national Panorama, and it was already 2am and the audience was sure they had already heard the winner. The author was among those who had already walked a mile away when **Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed's** (photo above) Guinness Cavaliers Steelband began to play. Suddenly, those around him began to slow down, then paused to listen to the powerful sound that was reaching them even at this distance. Some began turning back, first walking then running to get a glimpse of this mystery band. The author was among those who were completely hypnotised by the commanding sound of this band and



Right: Guinness Cavaliers' Lennox "Mohammed" (white shirt). Left: 2nd from right is Bobby's brother, Selwyn Mohammed (who went on to arrange for Renegades before the baton was passed to the legendary Jit Samaroo).

especially the riveting new sound of their six - 6 bases which steered the beautiful harmonies and key changes of their arrangement of Lord Kitchener's *'Hold on to Your Man'* – also played earlier by Pan Am North Stars. All who were there, in the very early hours of the morning and witnessed this spectacle, knew that Panorama 1965 would be a real battle for supremacy between the powerful bands of the North and the lone South Trinidad's representative, Guinness Cavaliers. The newspapers and radio stations were filled with speculation and the entire population, many of whom hitherto took little interest in pan, seemed totally engrossed in the outcome of the Panorama finals in 1965. In something that would not be done today, Mohammed (having just won South Trinidad's panorama with *'Waltz in A flat'*) went to the finals with another calypso, Lord Melody's *"Mas"* and pulled off one of the most sensational victories in all the years of the Panorama competition (Shannon, 2007). Lewis (2013) recalls *"In 1965 this great man gave to the country in Melody Mas the greatest Panorama performance ever, on a night of heavyweights, when he dethroned the great Pan Am North Stars with his previously unknown band. This man was iconic"*. San Fernando and the South were jubilant and waited all night to celebrate the arrival of

their heroes at J'Ouvert in the most public outpouring of emotion ever seen in the city. (see Shah, 2006, 2008, Wright, 2011) and link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-c0L75j7Jo>. David Rudder in his calypso *'Engine Room'* poignantly pays tribute to him as *"Bobby Mohammed with the Bell"*; the percussion piece he used to inspire the leadership qualities of this musical genius.

In 1966, Guinness Cavaliers was awarded the prize for 'best arrangement' for Mohammed's 'scintillating arrangement' of Acts I and IV of the Opera *Carmen*. He took the daring step in the 1967 Musical Festival of entering with two of his own classical compositions, *'Gallopade'* and *'The Revelation from Beyond'*. The band went on to perform in many countries around the world as ambassadors for TT during the 1960's and 70's. Mohammed was recruited to the National Steelband which comprised the top pannists of the country and also served as the band's arranger. Many years later, in 1992, Mohammed was honoured with one of TT's highest national awards, the Hummingbird Gold Medal. In 2019, one of the major streets in San Fernando, Harris Promenade East, was renamed *"Lennox "Bobby" Mohammed Street"* in honour of the services and pride he brought to the city. His brother, **Selwyn Mohammed** (see

photo above), a gifted tenor player and arranger also, went on to arrange for Renegades in the late 1960s, eventually passing the baton to the legendary Jit Samaroo (see right).

Another prominent Arranger / Educator / Leader from San Fernando of East Indian descent was **Steve Achaiba**. He played with Tropical Heartbeats (1955-56), Hatters (1958) Rogues Regiment (1959) before joining Guinness Cavaliers for the first panorama in 1963. Achaiba, along with Lester Mohammed (Bobby Mohammed's youngest brother) were the backbone of Guinness Cavaliers' formidable 'Bass Section' that was so symbolic of their music. Achaiba was so greatly influenced by the music of Cavaliers that when he re-joined Maritime Life Hatters Steel Orchestra in 1968 (until 1977) as an arranger, echoes of the music of his former band, Guinness Cavaliers reverberated in his arrangements. However, it was with Hatters that he achieved his ultimate dream of winning the National Panorama in 1975 as a player/arranger. The band amassed the largest ever ensemble of 172 players (156 pan and 16 rhythm players). He demonstrated considerable musicianship, paying a great deal of attention to acoustics and arrangement of pans during performances. Under his leadership, the band recorded three LPs in 1975. In the 1980s he arranged for South Stars Steel Orchestra and Invaders (1985-86). He initiated the Naparima Girls' School Steel Orchestra in 1975 and broke new ground by leading them to the Junior Panorama championship in 1980 as the first all-girls Steelband to accomplish this feat. His untimely death on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 was mourned and celebrated throughout the Steelband world. See "Remembering Steve Achaiba – Champion Arranger" link: <https://whensteeltalks.ning.com/forum/topics/remembering-steve-achaiba-champion-arranger-1975>

and

<https://www.panonthenet.com/history/first-first/steve-achaiba-first-first.htm>



Jit Samaroo and the Renegades from the tribute album PanBrassOrama 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2017. <https://steelband.co.uk/jit-samaroo-and-the-renegades/>

No individual in the history of steelpan better demonstrates the impact of the fusion of ethnic influences on the development of this glorious instrument than **Jit Sukha Samaroo**. Unlike all the individuals cited in this paper who were born and grew up within the radius of a Steelband, Jit was

born into a quiet, serene little village in Lopinot Valley, well outside the compass of the world of Steelband. He was the 7<sup>th</sup> of 13 children in an East Indian family. He repeatedly stated that his early musical influences came from his mother who loved playing the East Indian dholak drum.

The early death of his mother in 1962 left the young Jit, then only 11 years with the responsibility to take care of his siblings.



The East Indian two-headed 'dholak' hand-drum that Jit's



Dr Jit Samaroo at his graduation in 2003.

He turned to music to provide their livelihood and exploited the rich Spanish culture of the area by playing Parang Music house to house with his newly formed 'Samaroo Kids Combo'.



Serendipity played an enormous part in his meteoric rise and one of the most titanic epochs in the history of the Steelpan. This came through a chance meeting with Landig White, the musical director, 'Lever Brothers Canboulay Steelband'. Jit became a pan student under White, becoming extremely proficient very quickly. This led to Jit starting the 'Samaroo Kids Steel Orchestra' who made their debut at UWI in 1967. Jit was introduced to Renegades in 1971 by Bertrand "Butch" Kelman, who tuned for both the 'Samaroo Kids Steel Orchestra' and 'Renegades Steelband'. Jit replaced Selwyn Mohammed, younger brother of Bobby Mohammed (above), as the arranger for Renegades. Their interaction in Renegades is now mythical, winning the national Panorama competition an implausible nine times, including a historic hattrick between 1995 - 1997. Jit also arranged for several other Steelbands, both at home and abroad, and was awarded the Hummingbird Silver Medal of Merit in 1987, and the Chaconia Silver Medal in 1995. Outside of Renegades, he kept the family band, now the 'Samaroo Jets' active and in 1997 and 1999 put on two full-length concerts consisting solely of his work. The 'Samaroo Jets' toured extensively, performing in North and South America, Europe and the Caribbean. Jit was also a prolific composer, writing several test pieces for national Steelband competitions for schools and adult Steelbands (Shannon, 2007). He drew on his roots to build a cross-cultural inventory that included Ballads, Gospel, Jazz, Folk, Latin Jazz, Chutney, Indian and Calypso. The depth, quality and extraordinary voluminous repertoire of his work, his immense contribution to education and the culture of TT led the University of the West Indies to award him an honorary doctorate in 2003. At only 65, he passed away in 2016. His legacy lives on through his son, Amrit Samaroo, arranger/leader of 'Supernovas Steel Orchestra' of their hometown, Lopinot Village and the tens of thousands of

steelpan aficionados and 'students' he stimulated around the world.

Profile: see link:

<http://www.mypanyard.co.uk/Pioneers-Samaroo-Renegades.html>

---

### 3) Leadership and Pannists

One of the unexplained paradoxes of life in TT is the extraordinary discipline manifested by pannists in the panyard and the propensity to 'lime' once out. This transformative doctrine is a measure of the gravity that leaders/pannists have instilled into their artform from inception and is still retained. The author has been to panyards across the country and has never witnessed any deviation from this pattern. Over the years, it became clearly evident that good leadership is the cornerstone of a successful Steelband and needs to be outside the responsibilities of the tuners, arrangers, pannists and managers. Competitions such as the National Panorama or Music Festival entails intense teaching, mostly by rote and demands good leadership skills. A key duty is to inspire and retain members in good spirit during long hours of unrelenting practice in an open, cramped, and often deafening atmosphere. One of those who demonstrated exemplary qualities is **Dudley Rouffe**. Rouffe was Indian-born and bred in the heartland of urban Port of Spain and became leader of what is today Carib Tokyo. The band originated in the 1940s in John John, the heart of Orisha country and produced some of the finest players and tuners including the legendary Winston "Spree" Simon. Rouffe became a respected community and Steelband leader, passing on the mantle to his son, who now represents the band in North America. Another product of this community who developed under the leadership of Rouffe was Harold Phillips who migrated to England. Phillips lived in Liverpool and was the driving force behind one of the most successful pop groups of all time, the



renowned ‘Beatles’ (McGrath, 2010, 2014).

San Fernando and the South produced a raft of formidable pannists of East Indian decent such as Selwyn Mohammed, Lester Mohammed, the Lakattoo brothers, Victor Sammy, Azad Ali, Zaid "Tosca" Mohammed and others who held leadership positions in Steelbands across the country. For example, **Zaid ‘Tosca’ Mohammed** led ‘True Tones Steelband’, Princess Town, in which the Calypsonian Lord Maestro was a member. He later formed the new Steelband, ‘Trinidad Maestros’ in Pleasantville, San Fernando which was led by pan tuner, Steve Lalsingh (Cyril Khamai- per. comm). As a proficient double-tenor player, Tosca also arranged for many bands and helped others get started. He moved to Guinness Cavaliers in 1964, and was one of the lead players, deputising and arranging for the band in Bobby Mohammed’s absence. Haroun Shah who played under his leadership in 1967, commented: *“Tosca had his own unique style of arranging, yet incorporated resonant echoes of Cavaliers, hence when the band performed publicly, it blended in as part of the Cavaliers’ repertoire”*. One outstanding piece was his arrangement of Matt Munro’s “Walk Away” which the band enjoyed playing.

Khamai recalls a host of East Indian players in San Fernando who were pioneering the development of steelpan while San Juan boasted Lol and Jack Bactawa. In Couva and Central Trinidad, the Zackarali family were among the early pioneers in steelpan. Brothers Ishmael “Luxy”, Renzi, Fyi and sister, Joy Zackarali played in Southern All Stars. Luxy was the band leader/arranger while Joy and Luxy’s wife, Jenny, were among the early women pannists. They continue to play to the present day, taking the band into remote communities for charity events but also entered panorama and several competitions. The magazine “Trinidad Carnival” carried a feature article

titled “Winners of 1982” with their three-year old son, Joe playing with Shades in Steel Steelband at the South Trinidad Panorama finals. Luxy single-handedly rescued the well-known south Steelband, Southern All Stars after their demise on Carib Street, San Fernando in 1953, moving the band to its new panyard at his school in Claxton Bay. Led by Luxy and Renzi Zackarali, ‘Southern All Stars’ remains to date the sole Steelband on the streets of San Fernando during both days of carnival. Bobby Mohammed has served as the drill master of the band and more recently was instrumental in connecting the band to Nostalgia Steelband in London from 2014. Luxy Zackarali arranged for Nostalgia Steelband in London from 2014 -2019, winning the ‘Best Traditional Band’ title four times and hosted the band for carnival 2018 in San Fernando (see this issue).

Angus Lalsingh was a leader of Seabees Steelband (named after the John Wayne movie, ‘The Fighting Seabees’) of San Fernando from which the eminent musician Nerlin Taitt blossomed. Taitt, first a pannist, worked closely with Bobby Mohammed before joining San Fernando’s ‘Dutchy Brothers’ as a guitarist. He migrated to Jamaica to work with numerous bands, playing guitar but using his skills from steelpan to establish a new beat, ‘Ska’ and ‘Rocksteady’ that revolutionised Jamaican music (Johnson, 2008). Apart from Angus and Kenrick Lalsingh, most of Seabees players were of East Indian decent. In 1973, the ‘Birdsong Steel Orchestra’ was formed on the campus of the University of the West Indies by students. The Vice-Captain, Jerry Sagar of Tunapuna, was one of the few experienced band players then and went on to become Treasurer of Pan Trinbago, the representative organisation for TT’s Steelbands. Eddison ‘Laddie’ John was a founding member of Pamberi Steel Orchestra of San Juan. Laddie was one of the finest percussionists to ever play with the band and was a major influence in the development of that Steelband.

East Indians and Africans united to develop Steelbands in communities across Trinidad. In El Socorro, San Juan, there was a Steelband called 'Red River' whose members were mainly of East Indian descent. This band combined with other bands in the San Juan community to create the legendary San Juan All Stars, a band that participated in the first Panorama in 1963. In Tunapuna, the Pasea East Indian Steelband was formed in 1956. Later on, this band became Starland Steelband and was sponsored by Turban Company. Today's Tunapuna All Stars is the direct descendant of the aforementioned bands and comprises both members of Indian and African ancestries.

---

#### 4) Administration

The administrative structure of Steelbands varies vastly and has a direct bearing on their success musically and longstanding outlook. Raymond (2014) reported an in-depth analysis on one of Trinidad's oldest and most successful Steelbands, Invaders (1943) whose roots date back to 1937 as 'The Oval Boys'. However, for a new band to become established and simply subsist, requires enormous resources, skills, prudence, thrift, diligence and industry. Exodus Steel Orchestra broke this mould and established a presence almost instantaneously, continuing to perform at the highest level against formidable competition and emerged today as one of TT's foremost Steelbands. This astonishing feat has been attributed largely to the administrative skills and foresight of brothers Amin and Ainsworth Mohammed who have kept members loyal to the band for decades. They were originally part of Flamingoes Steel Orchestra that was conceived, nurtured and flourished around the family of the renowned pannist, Salah Wilson. Sited on Salah's grandmother's property, this Steelband of the 1970s suffered from such recurrent internal

disagreements and poor management that it led to an exodus of players on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1981 to become the core of the fledgling Steelband, Exodus Steel Orchestra at St John's Village, St Augustine (Burnett, 1996). The band was originally led by Amin Mohammed who demonstrated his passion and confidence, even mortgaging his house to buy instruments to get the band off the ground!

The Mohammed brothers, first Amin and subsequently younger brother Ainsworth, utilised their inherent skills in the financial world and established such a sound structure, that the band soon became an enviable model in the world of steelpan. With Exodus still in its infancy, Amin's skills were so respected, he was called upon to help reform the administration of carnival. In 1986, he was appointed Chairman of the Carnival Development Committee (CDC). He then helped transform the system which led to the National Carnival Commission (NCC) which gave them greater autonomy to organise the annual carnival.

Amin was clearly an innovator and was never short of novel ideas, among them, he conceived the Pan Ramajay competition to extend steelpan activities beyond carnival. Unfortunately for Trinidad and the Steelband movement, Amin's job took him to the Cayman Islands in 1993, as president of the Bank of the Cayman Islands, where he lived until his death in 1998. Luckily, younger brother Ainsworth, manager at Republic Bank, possessed comparable skills and stature and has been at the helm of this extraordinary band ever since. The band remains highly competitive with an incredible track record of four panorama and three Steelband Music Festival titles. (Table 1). Today, Exodus is not only the pride of Tunapuna, but of TT and Steelbands around the globe. It is a tribute to the legacy of brothers Amin and Ainsworth that they are one of only a few steelbands which, having performed at

panorama, return to play on the streets Port of Spain during both days of carnival. And to crown it all, Exodus teams up with the world's most gifted mas-designer, Peter Minshall for carnival (Minshall, 2013). Their dazzling presentation on Carnival Tuesday 2020, in which Exodus accompanied one of the many sections of the band, "Mas Pieta" won them "Band of the Year" for Carnival 2020.

---

## Conclusion

Steelband symbolises TT's soundtrack during its struggle with the economic and cultural consequences of neo-colonialism and helps to define the nation's place in history. Gangelhoff and LeGrand (2013) states "*Steelpan music almost defies definition; the instrument lends itself to many playing styles. Steelpan music is a living tradition in Trinidad and efforts to document this tradition continue*". The present paper describes briefly one aspect of the history of Steelband, East Indian involvement, where there is a dire paucity of information and seeks discussion to begin to fill this void (Sullivan, 1997, 2017). Joseph asserts "*It is bad enough that the Indian contribution to the development of the steel orchestra has so often been underrated, but what is infinitely worse is the misguided view that pan is an African thing*" (Joseph, 1998). He further suggests that the Indian community bears part of the responsibility for being complacent by failing to document any of their own experiences or even undermining their own achievements in the history of pan. There are many towns in Trinidad such as San Fernando, Couva, Princess Town, Fyzabad, Siparia, Penal etc. where vibrant, predominantly East Indian communities used both Tassa and Steelpan for carnival and religious festivals (Anthony, 2001, Noorkumar, 1984). for carnival and religious festivals (Anthony, 2001, Noorkumar, 1984). Tassa has influenced

some of TT's most celebrated pannists. For example, Pelham Goddard states he "*had become very involved with Tassa drumming for the Hosay Festival*" (Phillips 2010) while Len "Boogsie" Sharpe, in an interview with DeLamater in 2005, said that his unique rhythmic sensibility stems from the fact that his childhood home had "*a Steelband on one side and a Tassa band on the other*" (DeLamater, 2011). He emphasised that certain rhythmic breaks and tags appear in Steelband arrangements that are similar to Tassa rhythms. It is therefore not surprising to see steelbands including Tassa drums on stage, including panorama, particularly with the arrival of Soca, Chutney and cross-cultural genres.

The indispensable role of steelpan and carnival arts to the development and long-term future of the nation of Trinidad & Tobago has long been proposed. As early as 1920, patriot, anti-colonialist and fervent vanguard of the steelpan movement, Albert Gomes advocated nationalism by championing West Indian, African, and Indian history and culture (Steumpfle, 1995). The indomitable, Claudia Jones (Boyce Davis, 2008) who initiated London's Notting Hill Indoor Carnival in 1959 stated that "*A people's art is the genesis of their freedom*", while TT's foremost artist, Peter Minshall reminded the nation that "*The creative expression of a people are what represent it to the rest of the world*" and called for the establishment for a TT Ministry of Arts (Minshall, 1985, 2013). Capturing all aspects of the history of these artforms is imperative, especially by grassroots practitioners and devotees who have personal experience in specific areas or witnessed epiphanic moments in steelpan. The humble little town of Siparia was the early home of Bobby Mohammed, Nerlin Taiit, the distinguished jazz pannists and arranger, Carlton 'Zanda' Alexander and one of TT's leading band, Siparia Deltone while Fyzabad's Billy Ocean is an international celebrity and a member of the UK's premier band, Ebony Steelband.

There are many untold pannists in these smaller towns whose involvement needs to be recognised. This journal provides a platform to document such events and

capture in minutiae, the many facets of the long and complex history of this glorious instrument, Trinidad & Tobago's gift to the world!

**Table 1. Panorama victories by some of the icons mentioned in the texts.**

Year/Arranger/Steelband	Panorama Tune	Composer
1963 - <a href="#">Anthony Williams</a> Pan Am North Stars	"Dan Is the Man"	Mighty Sparrow
1964 - Anthony William Pan Am North Stars	"Mama Dis Is Mas"	Lord Kitchener
1965 - Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed Guinness Cavaliers 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pan Am North Stars	"Melody Mas" "Hold on to Your Man"	Lord Melody Lord Kitchener
1966 - 1 <sup>st</sup> Beverly Griffith Desperados 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed Guinness Cavaliers	"Obeah Wedding" "My Brother, Your Sister"	Mighty Sparrow Lord Kitchener
1967 Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed Guinness Cavaliers	"Sixty-Seven"	Lord Kitchener
<b>1975 Steve Achaiba</b> <b>Hatters</b>	<b>"Tribute to Spree Simon"</b>	<b>Lord Kitchener</b>
<b>1992 Pelham Goddard/Desmond Waithe</b> <b>Exodus</b>	<b>"Savannah Party"</b>	<b>Pelham Goddard</b>
<b>2001 Pelham Goddard</b> <b>Exodus</b>	<b>"Happy Song"</b>	<b>Pelham Goddard</b>
<b>2003 Pelham Goddard</b> <b>Exodus</b>	<b>"Pandora"</b>	<b>DeFosto</b>
<b>2004 Pelham Goddard</b> <b>Exodus</b>	<b>"War"</b>	<b>DeFosto</b>
1982 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Pan Explosion"	Lord Kitchener
1984 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Sweet Pan"	Lord Kitchener
1985 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Pan Night and Day"	Lord Kitchener
1989 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Somebody"	Winsford "Joker" Devine
1990 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Iron Man"	Lord Kitchener
1993 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Mystery Band"	Lord Kitchener
1995 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Four Lara Four"	Merchant/DeFosto
1996 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Pan in a Rage"	DeFosto
1997 Jit Samaroo Renegades	"Guitar Pan"	Lord Kitchener



## Acknowledgements:

The paper is based on a personal account of my experience growing up in San Juan, Port of Spain, Trinidad. The influence of Hosay and my involvement with the East Indian community and later the strong influence of steelpan while I was still a student at Bourg Mulatresse RC and St Joseph Boys RC primary schools, then St Mary's College, Port of Spain and subsequently as a teacher that have helped shaped my career, not only as a steelpan player but as an avid promoter

for this instrument abroad. The work presented is based on interviews and discussions with legendary icons such as Bobby Mohammed (Guinness Cavaliers), Anthony Williams (Pan Am North Stars), Jit Samaroo (Renegades), Cyril Khamai (Nostalgia Steelband) and numerous colleagues both in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad and I gratefully acknowledge their support. I would also like to recognise Drs. Suzanne Burke (UWI) and Haroun Shah, (Nostalgia Steelband and Middlesex University, London) for their help and encouragement with this manuscript.

---

## References

- Anthony, Michael, 2001. Towns and Villages of Trinidad and Tobago. Chapter 40, pp. 248-262. Publisher: Printmaster (W.I.) Ltd, Marabella. ISBN: 976-8068  
<https://www.abebooks.com/9780009768064/Towns-Villages-Trinidad-Tobago-Anthony-0009768068/plp>
- Belgrave I., 2011. "Dare to Struggle - A History of the Communication Workers' Union." Lexicon Trinidad Ltd.
- Boyce Davis, Carole, 2008. Claudia Jones, Left of Karl Marx. Duke University Press. **Paper ISBN: 978-0-8223-4116-1.**
- Brown, Ernest D., 1990. Carnival, Calypso, and Steelband in Trinidad. *The Black Perspective in Music*. Vol. 18, pp. 81-100. doi:10.2307/1214859.
- Burnett, Trevor, 1996. Out of Flamingoes - an Exodus. Trinidad, Express Newspaper, Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> 1996, pp 37.
- Central Statistical Office, 2011. Trinidad and Tobago Population and Housing Census Demographic Report, Trinidad and Demographics of Trinidad and Tobago  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Trinidad\\_and\\_Tobago](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Trinidad_and_Tobago).
- Chitwood, Ken, 2018. Ph.D. Candidate, Religion in the Americas, Global Islam, University of Florida (26<sup>th</sup> September 2018).  
<https://theconversation.com/how-an-ancient-islamic-holiday-became-uniquely-caribbean-102161>
- Clarke, Colin G., 1986. East Indians in a West Indian Town, San Fernando, Trinidad, 1930-70. Pluralism in San Fernando and beyond, Chapter 9, pp143-151. Publishers, Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, Boston and Sydney. ISBN 0043091067

- Cowley, John, 2008. *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making*. Cambridge University Press, ISBN-10: 0521653894, ISBN-13: 978-0521653893.
- DeLamater, Elizabeth, 2011. "White College Boy Steelbands" in 1950s Trinidad: How Middle-Class Teenagers Helped the Steelpan Gain National Acceptance. Doctoral thesis for Musical Arts. Arizona State University.
- Dudley, Shannon, 2007. *Music from Behind the Bridge; Steelband Spirit and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*. Oxford University Press, New York, ISBN-10: 0195321235.
- Funk, Ray, 2013. Cyril Khamai; Quite Pan Pioneer. *Pan Podium*. Issue 24, pp 34-35. <https://issuu.com/panpodium3/docs/pp24>
- Gangelhoff, Christine, LeGrand, Cathleen, 2013. Art Music by Caribbean Composers: Trinidad and Tobago. *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies*. DOI: 10.15362/ijbs.v19i2.190.
- Gooptar, Primnath, 2020. Whats in an Indian diaspora name in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The University of Trinidad and Tobago Alumnus. <https://www.academia.edu/4919372/>
1983. "The History of Carnival." *The Social and Economic Impact Carnival*. Seminar Held at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 24-26 November 1983. St. Augustine, Trinidad.
- Harney, Stefano, 1996. *Nationalism and Identify: Culture and the Imagination in a Caribbean Diaspora*. University Press of the West Indies, Kingston. ISBN-10: 9766400164.
- Hill, Donald R., 1993. *Calypso Calaloo: Early Carnival Music in Trinidad*. Published by University Press of Florida, ISBN-10: 0813012228.
- Johnson, Kim, 2008. Nerlin Taitt: the secret Trinidadian hero of Jamaican Ska & Rocksteady Music. *Caribbean Beat*. (September/October). Issue 93.
- Joseph, Terry, 1998. Indian Arrival in the Panyard. May 24, 1998, pp. 16. *When Steel Talks*: <https://whensteeltalks.ning.com/profiles/blogs/indian-arrival-in-the-panyard>
- Joseph, Terry, 1992. New Pan Created - but in Ohio, USA. *Express New Paper*, pp. 24. <https://uwispace.sta.uwi.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2139/40398/OL22.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Lewis, Theodore, Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Pan Icons Bobby Mohammed and Guinness Cavaliers. *Trinidad & Tobago Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.395251.a512a10ccd>
- Mahabir, Noorkumar, 1984. *The Influence of the Tassa on the Making of the Steelband: The East Indian contribution to the Trinidad Carnival*, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago. Accessioned; 2015-09-21T16:23:16Z. Trinidad Express New papers (17<sup>th</sup> February 1984).
- Martin, Andrew, 2013. Cyril Khamai, Global Pan Pioneer. *Trinidad & Tobago Guardian*, Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013. <http://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.394806.55a2071e85>

McGrath, James, 2010. Liverpool's black community and the Beatles, Soundscapes, Vol.12. [http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/VOLUME12/Interview\\_McGrath.shtml](http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/VOLUME12/Interview_McGrath.shtml)

McGrath, James, 2014. "Lord Woodbine, The Calypsonian and Panman, Mentor to the Beatles". Plenary Lecture. Conference: 'The profound influence of the Caribbean Carnival Art Forms (steelpan, calypso and masquerade) within the diaspora and in the wider world. 5<sup>th</sup> International Steelpan Conference.

Minshall, Peter, 1985. The Use of Traditional Figures in Carnival Arts. Presentation at the First National Conference on The Performing Arts (23<sup>rd</sup> June 1985).

Minshall, Peter, 2013. Nignorance and Enwhitement. Carnival, Theory and Practice. Chapter 1, pp 3- 23. Edited by Innes, Christopher, Rutherford, Annabel and Bogar Brigitte. Africa World Press Inc.

Ozuzu, Chioma Viola, 2012. "Steel Pan's Heart". How a drum made in tiny island nation brings world cultures together in the midst of struggle. Analysis of Trinidad's National Instrument in a multicultural nation-state. Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 2012. Trinity College Digital Repository, <http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/196>

Pasea East Indians Steelband. Defunct Pansides (Steelbands) - TnTisland.com <http://www.tntisland.com/pansides.html> (cited under East Indians)

Perry, John Allen, 1969. "A History of the East Indian Indentured Plantation Worker in Trinidad, 1845-1917." Louisiana State University, Historical Dissertations and Theses. 1612. [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_disstheses/1612](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1612)

Phillips, C., 2010. Pelham Goddard, Pan in the Mas. Pan on the Net. <http://www.panonthenet.com/tnt/2010/tunes/pan-in-the-mas.htm> (accessed September 8, 2011)

Raymond Family, 1975. Raymond Family - Oriental Songs And Music <https://www.discogs.com/Raymond-Family-Oriental-Songs-And-Music-3/release/8445673>

Raymond, Martin A., 2014. Carnival Studies CAST5008 – Panyard Studies, Report on Invaders Steelband – Carnival 2014. [https://www.academia.edu/35268210/PANYARD\\_STUDIES\\_M\\_RAYMOND3](https://www.academia.edu/35268210/PANYARD_STUDIES_M_RAYMOND3)

Saraswatie Steel Orchestra, 1960. Led by Asgarali Mohammed. Calypsography - <https://calypsography.com/artist/1286/>

Shah, Haroun, 2006. Trinidad in the 1960s: Transformation to the Big Band. Profile of Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed. Proceedings of the First Biennial Steelpan Conference. Steelband Music and Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/>

Shah, Haroun, 2008. Lennox 'Bobby' Mohammed and Guinness Cavaliers. Pan Podium. Issue 16, pp16 -17.

Simmonds, William Austin, 1959. 'Pan -The Story of the Steel Band'. BWIA International, Kent House, Maraval, Trinidad. <http://www.seetobago.org/trinidad/pan/history/ebooks/wasimmonds/panmen1959wasimmonds.htm>

Slater, John, 1986. *The Advent of the Steelband and my life and times with it; 1938-1995*. (Revised edition, 1995). Port of Spain. Litho Press Printers, Trinidad. ISBN No. 976-8157-35-6.

Spark, Stephen, 2018. Cyril Khamai - Golden Moments from the Star in Silver. SocaNews; <https://socanews.com/news/review/cyril-khamai-golden-moments-from-the-star-in-silver>

Steumpfle, Stephen, 1995. *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago*. Chapter 3, pp 76- 140. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sullivan, Nestor, 1997. East Indian Influence in the Steelband Movement in Trinidad and Tobago. Conference lecture; Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, USA.

Sullivan, Nestor, 2017. The Construction of Identity in the Steelband Movement of Trinidad and Tobago; East Indian Involvement in Steelband. Proceedings of the symposium entitled "Memory, Politics and Performance in the Trinidad Carnival Complex". University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad.

Teelucksingh J., 2016. The Charismatic Tubal Uriah Butler. In: *Ideology, Politics, and Radicalism of the Afro-Caribbean*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York ISBN 978-1-349-94865-9.

National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago; Tubal Uriah Butler - <https://natt.gov.tt/sites/default/files/pdfs/ButlerRevisedBoards11June.pdf>

Thomas, Ross Jeffrey, 1992. *Forty Years of Steel: An Annotated Discography of Steel Band and Pan Recordings, 1951-1991 Contributions in Sociology*, Publisher: Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London.

Tinker, Hugh. 1982. East Indian in the Caribbean: colonialism and the struggle for identity: Proceedings of a Symposium on East Indians in the Caribbean, June 1975. The University of the West Indies, June 1975. Conference book. Publisher: Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus. ISBN: 0527108480 9780527108489

Virtual Museum of Trinidad and Tobago, 2012. November 4, 2012 <https://www.caribbeanmuslims.com/the-hosay-or-muharram-massacre-of-1884-in-trinidad/>

Wright, Orville, 4<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2011. Bobby Mohammed Memories in Pan; When a South Band conquered the Big Yard. The Caribbean Review <https://www.caribbeanreview.org/2011/09/bobby-mohammed-memories-in-pan/>

---



## **Culture, Business and National Identity Politics - The Effect of Cultural Management Policies and Practices on the Creative Ecology of Trinidad and Tobago**

**Suzanne Burke PhD**

Lecturer in Cultural Studies, University of the West Indies,  
St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago.

---

### **Abstract**

This paper examines how state support for the cultural sector has influenced the strategies that are employed by cultural organisations to brand, market and obtain sponsorship for two events within Trinidad and Tobago's carnival domain. The two case studies illustrate how the state's penchant for linking hallmark carnival events to representations of national identity influences their policies toward the sector. The paper also raises larger questions about the carnival's sustainability in the light of dwindling state resources, changing identity politics and the transactional sponsorship approaches of the private sector. The research uses a mixed method approach including surveys, interviews and participant observation to illustrate how the operating environment compels cultural organisations and creative entrepreneurs to focus on the short-term production costs at the expense of developing strategies for long-term sustainability. The paper concludes by identifying some critical considerations for ameliorating the operating environment for cultural industry development in Trinidad and Tobago.

---

**Key Words:** Trinidad Carnival, Hallmark Event Management, Caribbean Festival Ecology.

### **Introduction**

Carnival was brought to Trinidad by French planters in the 18th century and evolved to incorporate the traditions of the other societal groups including the enslaved Africans and the indentured Asians. During the colonial period, the festival was celebrated as a temporary reprieve from the strictures of everyday life. However, by 1957, Trinidad and Tobago's First Minister, Dr. Eric Williams declared carnival the country's national festival and by 1962 when the country achieved independence, it became a central symbol of the country's emerging national identity. Trinidad's carnival is in the pre-Lenten Catholic tradition and is known for four distinctive elements, namely masquerade parades, steelband orchestras, calypso

music and its more danceable derivative soca, as well as fetes that take place in the period leading up to the two days of celebration on the street. The Trinidad Carnival is celebrated by the state as a vehicle to promote the Creole 'all ah we is one' narrative that celebrates the nation's ethnic diversity. In keeping with this narrative, the country has branded itself as the 'Land of Steelband and Calypso,' and in 1992 the steelband<sup>1</sup> was designated as the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago.

More recently, the Trinidad carnival has garnered even more support for its economic value. In this regard, it has attracted consistent attention from both the public and private sectors for its ability to generate income, create employment, brand

---

<sup>1</sup> Also known as 'steeldrums', 'steelpan' or 'pan'.

the country as a cultural destination and enhance the corporate image of the business community. For example, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) data indicates that the country's creative sector of which carnival constitutes the major part, accounted for 4% of GDP and 4.3% of total employment in 2014 (2017:11/12). The business sector is very involved in the festival through their sponsorships of all major carnival events, albeit not at the same level as the state. The Carnival season also represents the high point in the country's tourism calendar and consistently attracts over 50,000 visitors, with about half of that number comprising 'returning residents' from the diaspora (CSO, 2016). For all these reasons, the creative sector is constantly referenced as a critical element in the country's economic diversification agenda.

This paper will illustrate how the state manages this cultural asset, by examining how it formulates the cultural industry policy to capture and exploit the festival's symbolic and financial values. Two events will be used to derive an understanding of the policy's role, function and impact, namely the National Panorama Semi Finals and the International Soca Monarch Finals. The two events under review are hallmark events and represent two of the most popular events in the carnival calendar and respectively signal the beginning and the end of two weeks of intensive celebrations on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. It must be noted that both events are competitions aimed at recognising the best practitioner in each art form. The winners of both events derive a great deal of cachet from being crowned monarch, both in terms of bragging rights and through direct economic gains from prize monies and performance earnings during the year of their reign. As such, both these events are highly contested and provide a useful lens to examine the country's creative ecology by showing how state and private sector

approaches to the creative sector influence its performance and sustainability.

The study employed a mixed method approach to data collection. The first step involved determining the primary stakeholders for each event by using Hede's (2007) interpretation of Stakeholder Theory as it pertains to special events management. Primary stakeholders were determined to be the event organisers, state officials, sponsors, attendees, performers and vendors. The survey method was used to capture information from the attendees, performers and vendors while key informant interviews were used to obtain information from the event organisers and state officials. Both methods captured the values (financial, symbolic and aesthetic) that each stakeholder group ascribed to the event, their views on the sustainability of both events and the audience motivations for attending. Both events were tracked over a two-year period and the findings represent an agglomeration of data from both years. In addition, the researcher attended planning meetings by the organizers to gain insights into the organizational principles that guided event implementation. The research findings were also analysed by positioning them within the context of various policy texts, industry reports and media stories.

The surveys were conducted by a team of twelve persons in the case of the International Soca Monarch (ISM) and by a team of eight persons in the case of the National Panorama Semi Finals (NPSF). A total of 613 persons were surveyed for the NPSF and 429 for the ISM. The survey teams were briefed before the event and the researcher was on site to deal with any questions or complications that may have arisen during the process. Surveys were deployed before, during and after the events to get an even view of audience reactions throughout the event. A representative sample approach was applied in terms of age, gender and residence. The

configuration of seating in both events was based on a tiered system of VIP, General, All Access and Free sections, which helped the research team to segment the audiences. Once completed, the responses were coded to extract the emerging themes. The motivation for attendance draws from the framework developed by Faulkner *et al.* 1999 that identified eight reasons for audience attendance at music festivals. They include:

- i. Local culture/identity
- ii. Excitement/novelty seeking
- iii. Party
- iv. Local attractions
- v. Socialisation
- vi. Known group socialisation
- vii. Ancillary activities
- viii. Desire to see artists

---

## Key Concepts

The study will be underpinned by two interrelated concepts. The first is the concept of event resource dependency, which was employed by Getz *et al.* (2007) and will be used to examine the role of government financing in shaping the production and consumption of the events under review. According to Getz *et al.* (2007) event resource dependency theory examines how festivals obtain resources to maintain production. Festivals that have a *good fit* with their environment tend to attract the requisite resource support whereas those that do not, or have internal management challenges experience problems attracting resources. Abercrombie and Longhurst's (1998) audience segmentation model will be used to understand how different types of consumers enjoy events. This model identifies audience types, namely the *consumer* whose enjoyment of the art form is light and generalised and whose attendance is based on cost and convenience; the *fan* whose interest is based on an attachment to a particular star

or programme and whose engagement is more frequent and focused; the *cultist* whose tastes are highly specialized and the *enthusiast* who is extremely knowledgeable about the art form and whose interest is incorporated into their daily lives and value systems. The overall goal is for event managers to turn the *consumer* into a *fan* or an *enthusiast* who exhibit higher levels of loyalty to the event.

---

## Background

Despite the fact that the Trinidad Carnival constitutes a major part of the country's cultural sector, a discrete policy to deal with the festival has never been developed. In 2014, the National Carnival Commission (NCC), the state agency responsible for carnival's development commissioned a study to inform the development of a policy for carnival. Among other things, the study suggested that the state develop the requisite systems to facilitate the ongoing measurement of the festival's social and economic impacts as the foundation for a carnival policy (James, 2014). As of writing, these systems have not yet been put in place even as another study on the efficacy of the NCC has been commissioned. As a result, the state's approach to the festival will be viewed through the lens of the draft National Cultural Policy which identifies four pillars for cultural development including the promotion of the creative arts, the preservation of heritage, industrial development of the creative industries and the facilitation of social cohesion. More specifically, the state's approach to carnival's development will be discerned through the NCC's three main objectives, which are:

1. To make Carnival a viable, national, cultural and commercial enterprise.
2. To provide the necessary managerial and organisational infrastructure for the efficient and effective presentation and

marketing of the cultural products of Carnival.

3. To establish arrangements for ongoing research as well as the preservation and permanent display of the annual accumulation of Carnival products created each year by the craftsmen, musicians, composers and designers of Carnival.

In this regard, the state gives the NCC an annual subvention to facilitate the hosting of the carnival. This investment has been steadily increasing over the last twenty years, from TT\$12m in 1996, TT\$ 70m in 2008, \$TT125m in 2011 and \$TT267m+ in 2016 (NCC). The resources are normally used to put on the various events within the festival and for the payment of prize monies for the various competitions.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, state support is heavily concentrated along the production end of the value chain, and it is primarily concerned with supporting individual artists, event organisations and creative entrepreneurs. The state also meets the cost of additional security, sanitation and infrastructural development associated with the carnival, which is staged at various venues throughout the country. On the other hand, there is less state support for the consumption end of the events value chain in terms of audience development, the distribution of cultural products or the construction a permanent purpose-built venue for the carnival arts.

---

## The National Panorama Semi Final Competition

The National Panorama Competition was established in 1963 as a showcase for the

best steel orchestras in the country. The event has three competition phases, including the preliminaries, the semi-finals and the finals. It involves four categories of competitors including single, small, medium and large steelband orchestras<sup>3</sup>. The National Panorama Semi Final (NPSF) Competition takes place over one weekend, with the single and small bands performing on the Saturday and the medium and large bands performing on the Sunday. The Sunday event is the more popular of the event days and usually attracts approximately 25,000 patrons. An average of thirty orchestras play songs that are composed specifically for the competition. The show is owned and organized by Pan Trinbago, the representative body of the steelband fraternity that sits on the NCC Board of Directors.

The event employs a mixed funding model that includes public subventions, private sponsorship, gate receipts and other earned income such as booth rental. However, the majority of funding for event production is obtained from the state in the form of an average annual subvention of TT\$34 million or US\$ 5.3 million (NCC, 2016). It is estimated that government support for the event accounts for about 85% of the total event costs. These resources are normally used to pay prize monies, assist the smaller unsponsored bands to get ready for the competition, develop infrastructure and cover the appearance fees for the performers. Only a small percentage of the

---

<sup>2</sup> There is a competition for almost every major artistic expression within the carnival including the following: Calypso Monarch, King and Queen of the Masquerade Bands, International Soca Monarch, Chutney Soca Monarch, Panorama Champions and Old Mas.

<sup>3</sup> The steel band was invented in Trinidad and Tobago during the 1930s and is classified as a percussive instrument in the idiophone class. Each year, orchestras

of different sizes compete for the title of Panorama champion in their respective categories. The large bands constitute the most prestigious category of competition and can include between 100-120 musicians playing over three hundred instruments.





Figure 1. 2014 Print Advertisement for the NPSF

Source: PanTrinbago

budget is used for event marketing because the demand for the show is usually high. Patrons know when the event will take place and are simply reminded of the event details on the organisation's website or via press releases in the print, electronic and social media. As the advertisement above (Fig. 1) shows, the message is basic and constitutes a 'reminder' advertisement, which only gives details of the date, time and venue while promoting the event as a celebration of steelband music. In the minds of the event producers, the loyalty to the event is so strong that there is no need for persuasive selling tactics since audiences already know what to expect from the event. Production costs for the event are high with the largest budgetary allotments dedicated to infrastructural development and the transportation of instruments to the venue. Most notably, the NPSF requires the construction of a stand that is assembled every year to hold between 8,000 – 12,000 audience members at a cost of about TT\$ 6m annually (NCC). In addition to these costs, there are performance fees and technical inputs such as light and sound.

The planning cycle is ongoing from year to year but the smooth flow is interrupted by the timing and quantum of the government subvention. Funding is often released mere weeks before the event and is a source of ongoing tension between Pan Trinbago officials and the government. In addition, Pan Trinbago officials state that the government subvention comes at a high price because the organization is often expected to give up hundreds of complimentary tickets to the government as a condition of the subvention, which further cuts into their bottom line. This unpredictability has engendered an increasing turn towards the private sector along with other event diversification efforts. However, the reliance on private sector sponsorship has yielded uneven results because the Arts and Culture Production Company Tax aimed at incentivising private sector investment in the cultural sector is gravely underutilized because the mechanisms to access it have not been clearly outlined by the government<sup>4</sup>. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Pan Trinbago does not have a sponsorship policy that clearly lays out its

<sup>4</sup> The Arts and Culture Production Company Tax, which was originally instituted in 2001 allows corporate sponsors to claim up to 150% of their expenditure on sports and cultural enterprises and events. However, the mechanisms to access the facility are generally not well

explained or worked out resulting in its under-utilisation by the private sector community. The Tax is currently under government review.

philosophy towards sponsorship, as well as the terms and conditions by which it seeks to engage prospective sponsors, beyond the need to obtain funds to offset productions costs. As a result, the organization is very dependent on state funds because of a flawed investment policy but also as result of a strong belief that it is the state's duty to fund the event because the steelpan is a constitutive part of the country's national identity. These two factors when added to the inherent institutional capacity issues of the organizing body make for highly resource dependent event.

Panorama has four main areas from which one can enjoy the show, the Grand Stand (GS), the North Stand (NS), the Greens and the Drag. The most populous areas are the North Stand and the Greens, while the Grand Stand and the Drag are experiencing declining patronage. The GS is the oldest seating area and houses the premium seats for the event. The orchestras face this stand to perform because this is where the judges are located. The older attendee (50+years) who wants to hear the music in a concert like atmosphere normally occupies this area and usually pays the least to attend the show. The NS faces the GS and the event promoters encourage a completely different atmosphere here. There is no seating and patrons are allowed to bring in their own food, drinks and musical instruments, which they play during the breaks in musical performances on the stage. This area generally attracts the upwardly mobile professional who primarily attends the event to socialise. The average NS attendee is between 35 - 46 years of age and pays the second highest to attend the event.

The third area, the 'Greens' is situated to the west of the stage. Patrons in this area cannot view performances nor can they enter the main venue. However, there is normally one screen streaming the show in real time for those who may be interested in viewing the action on stage. This area attracts the youngest demographic of

persons (35 years and under) who pay the most to attend the show. These patrons come to be seen, to socialize and to party. They usually have very light and generalized interest in the steelband music on offer. This area also provides opportunities for sponsors to showcase their products and to connect with prospective and loyal customers through the provision of product giveaways and live entertainment. Sponsors can spend upwards of TT\$ 100,000 (US\$ 15,625) to ensure that their booths are attractive to prospective audiences. The sponsors pay for booths in this area, and as such the 'Greens' provide a vital source of funds for the event organisers outside of the government subvention. Over the past five years, the event organizers have expended a great deal of energy and resources to make this area more attractive to sponsors and attendees. This area is arguably the most profitable area in the entire event. Finally, there is the Drag area, which is the main artery that leads the steelbands onto the stage. There is no charge to be in this area since this is where the bands queue and practice before going on the stage. Attendees in this area are free to mingle between and inside the bands while they rehearse. The Drag normally attracts the older steelband enthusiast who is supporting a particular steelband orchestra. The facilities here are very basic with temporary seating and portable toilets.

A total of three hundred and two (302) and three hundred and eleven (311) attendees were surveyed in 2014 and 2015 respectively. The surveys revealed that the majority (64%) of attendees have been attending the show for more than ten years, while many in the oldest demographic indicated that they had been attending the show for over forty years. The NPSF is a ritualistic event in the carnival calendar as evidenced by the high levels of audience loyalty among certain groups. Five major reasons for attendance were found, namely:

the love of culture and expression of national identity; In-group socialization; entertainment /atmosphere including ancillary activities; the love of steel band music and allegiance to specific steelband and steelband as a cultural tradition and ritual.

The motivations for attendance varied depending on the age and attendee placement within the event. Taken together the reasons were ranked as follows - (i.) Love of steelband music - 44%; (ii). Socialisation - 30%; (iii). Entertainment and atmosphere - 16%; (iv.) Tradition - 6% and Other - 3%. However, when broken up into audience segments based on age and placement within the venue, the variation in motivations is much clearer. The majority (81%) of the older demographic (50+ years) in the Grand Stand attended the event for the love of steelband music, followed by socialization (11%) and support for a band (8%). The majority of those in the North Stand aged 35-46 years attended to socialize with friends (45%), followed by the love of steel band music (22%), the atmosphere (10%) and tradition (7%). Attendees usually came to the event in groups of six to ten persons (37%) and sixteen or more people (26%). The majority of attendees in the Greens came for known group and external socialization (46%), followed by tradition (24%) and steel band music (18%). Meanwhile, the majority of persons in the Drag attended because of the music (42%), followed by the tradition (25%), in group socialization (18%) and

support for a specific band (5%) as shown below.

The various groups identified different reasons for attending. The most loyal followers in the Grand Stand and Drag areas were interested in the music. Meanwhile the groups in the North Stand and the Greens were more interested in the other forms of entertainment on display and the general socialization within the event. In this regard, the show has garnered different meanings for those who attend. However, their reasons for attendance were often at odds with each other and this tension came up several times as a source of concern during the research process.

The questions related to what the audiences valued about the event yielded a multiplicity of responses. Generally, all attendees identified the steelband music as an expression of local culture (33%) and socialising with friends (32%) as what they valued most about the show. This was followed by the atmosphere of the event (25%), namely the excitement, good vibes (conviviality), amenities (food and drink) and entertainment outside of the steelband music as their main sources of enjoyment. Only the Grand Stand patrons ascribed some value to the competitive aspect of the show. On the other hand, the things that patrons did not value pointed to management gaps in the organization of the event such as logistics and security. However, respondents identified some strategic decisions related to how the show is developed as a source of concern. These

**Table 1. Audience motivations for attending**

Motivation for attending	All areas	Grand Stand	North Stand	The Greens	The Drag
Love of steelband music	44%	81%	22%	19%	42%
Known group socialising	30%	11%	45%	46%	18%
Other forms of entertainment	8%	-	8%	5%	3%
General atmosphere	8%	-	10%	6%	-
Tradition/cultural ritual	6%	-	7%	24%	25%
Creativity	-	-	2%	-	-
Support for a steelband	-	8%	2%	-	8%
Other	3%	-	3%	-	3%

concerns are tied to the four discrete audience types that have been delineated. For example, the GS patrons disliked the NS attendees and generally felt they showed little respect for the national instrument because they party throughout the steelband performances and sometimes disturb the proceedings on the stage. Meanwhile, the NS patrons often showed complete disdain for the younger crews in the Greens, citing their ignorance about the steelband instrument and its music as a source of concern. The patrons on the Drag were generally critical of the entire direction of the event, which they felt was losing its links to the community and its 'grassroots' appeal and support.

The event organisers have not really developed strategies to mediate these tensions to ensure that the main event is not marginalised or eclipsed by the other types of entertainment on offer at the show. Most of the attendees did not appreciate the growing corporatization of the event, even as the presence of sponsors loomed large in the Greens and to a lesser extent in the North Stand, sometimes overshadowing the natural aesthetics of the event venue. This dissonance was exemplified in 2014 when one of the corporate sponsors, a water events company in collaboration with the executive of Pan Trinbago, introduced a huge portable swimming pool in the Greens, and invited patrons to participate in a pool party, entitled 'Pan Splash'. Patrons were being charged about TT\$ 700.00, almost twice the cost of tickets for the NS and GS in exchange for access to the pool and for premium food and drinks. The event principals justified the staging of 'Pan Splash' as providing another much-needed source of income for the organization. The President of Pan Trinbago explained:

*"I have a responsibility for this organization to find salaries to pay the staff. I heard quite a number of comments from the media and other circles about Pan Trinbago doing this and Pan Trinbago doing that, but let me say very clearly, we have to find ways to attract people... part of the profit ...will be distributed to the steelbands who will be in the semi-finals, that is a decision by the executive, and the steelbands have been informed about that at a general meeting<sup>5</sup>.*

The activity garnered overwhelmingly negative responses from the key stakeholders in steelband fraternity, the media and the general public. The following statement by Chantel Pouchet of the renowned steelband PCS Silver Stars, summed up the sentiments of many:

*"I just feel that it is a little sad that this is what Panorama has reached to and I think it is disrespectful to the bands involved. The governing body is supposed to represent us. People are not going to be interested in what is happening on stage and it is unfair to the competition and it is sad that we have to put up with that. I understand that they are trying to attract a different audience to the event, but I don't think that a pool party in pan semifinals is the right thing and it is unfair that we have to put up with that".<sup>6</sup>*

Another commentator positioned the Pan Splash pool party within the context of the class struggle that has been an integral part of carnival's history where the middle classes have been instrumental in neutralizing the voices of the working class in the festival domain:

*"This amounts to total disrespect to the pan {steelpan} fraternity. This pool party concept has nothing to do with raising*

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in the Trinidad Express Newspapers of February 14, 2014 "Pan Splash profits to help pay panmen" Accessed November 28, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in the Trinidad Express Newspapers of February, 13 2014. Accessed November 27, 2016. <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/PAN-SHAME-245475391.html>



*revenue but to kill the festival by appealing to a segment of a degenerate middle class who hate pan. They only love pan around Panorama time and would not invite the pan fraternity to play in their exclusive fetes and in their carnival bands. Their concern is to drink cases of rum, whiskey and vodka on that day and profile their nakedness, debauchery and licentiousness<sup>7</sup>."*

On the day of the event, the pool party was a stunning failure as not one single patron attended. The event received such negative feedback in the mainstream press and social media that even persons who purchased tickets avoided the area.

From the preceding discussion it can be seen that the Panorama is a ritualistic event that is closely linked to the national identity of the country. However, since its establishment in 1963, the event meanings have become more divergent among the various groups who now attend. The mounting costs of putting on the event coupled with the pressure to become less dependent on state subventions have conjoined to push the organizers to make some interesting choices regarding the elements they include in the event, the sponsors with whom they partner and the audiences they seek to attract. The efforts to stave off resource dependency have also resulted in the courtship of a wider range of sponsors whose focus have diffused the event's original purpose from being the ultimate showcase for the country's steelband orchestras to a generic carnival party that only features steel band entertainment. Moreover, the obduracy of the Arts and Culture Production Company Tax has resulted in the emergence of a purely transactional sponsorship relationship that focuses solely on product branding and growing market share. There is little evidence to suggest that the sponsors are partnering with the event

organizers to develop a more sustainable event by promoting steelband music.

The changing focus of the event can also be discerned from the changing theme of the event over the years from 'The Greatest Show on Earth', which appealed to the aesthetic quality and content of steelband performances to the 'Savannah Party' where the emphasis is placed on entertaining patrons with other forms of popular music. The evidence also suggests that the younger 'consumer' type audiences in the Greens are less interested in the steelband music on offer and there is no guarantee that they will develop into pan 'fans' or 'enthusiasts' to replace the aging audiences in the Grand Stand and the Drag even though the majority (over 50%) of all pan players are under the age of 35 years of age. The evidence suggests that these younger players are unable or unwilling to encourage their peers to attend the event to hear them play.

The findings also suggest that the event principals are experiencing difficulty in successfully balancing the needs of their primary stakeholders (i.e., the government, the private sector and performers) with the symbolic, aesthetic and financial values that audiences place on the event. This confusion is perhaps due to the absence of a clearly developed philosophy and business model for the show - such that the focus on immediate profiteering seems to trump considerations about the medium and long-term development of steelband audiences and steelband music. This has resulted in a very fragmented event that is tied to unpredictable funding arrangements, nationalistic branding, uneven event management practices and an aging core audience. These vulnerabilities were starkly brought into focus during the 2016 staging of the event. The Greens failed to garner the usual support from the corporate

<sup>7</sup> Panorama Pool Party by Cymande: February 14, 2014.  
Accessed November 27, 2016



Figure 2. ISM Print Ad 2015

community, who cited the downturn in the economy and increasing booth costs for their lackluster interest. These factors resulted in a tepid response from the young audience members who refused to purchase the expensive tickets to enter the area. Meanwhile, the NS, GS and Drag enjoyed the usual levels of support from the aging audience segments that were more interested in consuming the steelband music on offer.

### The International Soca Monarch (ISM) Finals

The International Soca Monarch (ISM- Fig. 2) was established in 1992 as a platform to showcase the best practitioners of soca music in the carnival. The ISM franchise hosts two main competitions including the Semi Final and the Finals that attract approximately seventy-five and twenty-five performers respectively. The ISM Finals attract approximately 20,000 patrons on the Friday night before the carnival weekend and is branded as ‘Fantastic

Friday’. The ISM actively encourages contestants from throughout the Caribbean and the diaspora in its attempt to internationalize the music and to use the show as a vehicle for destination branding. The show’s main content is soca music, which has not obtained the same level of state support as calypso, the traditional form of carnival music. The calypso, known for its didactic form is viewed as the more authentic and respectable genre of popular music by many of the policy gatekeepers. For example, the calypso tents that showcase calypso music are completely dependent on funding from the government to offset the declining audiences who patronize the art form. On the other hand, soca is generally viewed as more frivolous and light-hearted representation of carnival music. It is by far the more popular of the two musical expressions and is the soundtrack of the contemporary carnival celebrations.

A private entrepreneur owns the franchise and works along with an advisory group to organize the event<sup>8</sup>. The show uses a

<sup>8</sup> The franchise was owned by William Munroe but was sold in 2013 to another business enterprise.

combined funding model that seeks to prevent resource dependency including state funding, which usually accounts for about 55% of financing followed by private sector sponsorship (20%) and earned income (25%). The state normally covers the cost of prizes and performance fees for contestants, while private sector sponsorship is used for infrastructure, marketing and production.

The franchise spends about 15% of its budget on local and international marketing, which in 2014 accounted for \$TT 2.4m, the highest level of advertising spending for the carnival that year according to statistics from Neilson Media. Through its advertising campaigns, the ISM communicates the benefits and features of the event to potential attendees by employing both traditional and guerrilla marketing approaches to sell the show. The advertisement above showcases the theme 'Larger than Life' which was chosen for the 2015 staging of the event and sought to represent soca as an intrinsic aspect of the national lifestyle. The use of the national colours red, black and white underscored the importance of soca as an indigenous invention and appealed to the patriotism of the prospective audience members. The event also appeals to global audiences and is broadcast live on television and on pay per view to facilitate audiences at home in Trinidad as well as those in the Caribbean diaspora in North America and the United Kingdom. The significance of private

sector sponsorship is also evident by the number of logos shown at the bottom of the advertisement.

A total of two hundred and twenty-eight (228) and two hundred and one (201) audience members were polled during the Final night shows in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Respondents were evenly split between four age groups 15-25 years (27%); 26-35 years (28%); 36-45 years (21%) and over 46 years (24%). Audiences were accommodated in two areas inside the venue, namely the VIP Section, which is a seated area and a General Section where persons stand to view the show. Patrons interested in being close to the energy of the performances and desirous of dancing usually opt for the general area. The motivations for attendance were grouped into the following categories:

- i. In group socialization
- ii. Entertainment and excitement of event
- iii. Tradition and love of local culture
- iv. Love of soca music

About one-third (34%) of the audience members stated that they had been attending the event for over ten years, followed by 28% who had been attending for the first time, 25% for more than ten years and 14% for between six to ten years, which suggests solid brand loyalty to the event. Their reasons for attendance were primarily socialising (27%), entertainment (18%), to support the national culture

**Table 2. Audience motivations for attending**

No:	Reasons for attending	Percentage
1.	Socialising	27%
2.	Entertainment	18%
3.	To support national culture	11%
4.	Excitement of the event	10%
5.	Competition between performers	7%
6.	Love of music	4%
7.	Support for an artist	4%
8.	Other (complimentary tickets, work, launch of carnival, tradition)	19%

(11%) and the excitement of the event (10%). These findings suggest that the show is a platform for bringing friends and peers together with the music and entertainment taking second place. For instance, it was found that 38% of all attendees came in groups of six to ten persons while 32% came in groups of eleven or more persons.

The audience was also asked to share the values they ascribed to the show. The majority of respondents rated the overall appeal and value of the event as follows: the performances by the artists in the competition (25%), the programming of the show inclusive of guest artistes (19%), the entertainment and atmosphere of the show (18%) and the music itself (9%). The appeal of the competitive aspect to the show ranked very low at 7%. The findings revealed that the ISM brand is strong in terms of awareness and knowledge of the event. Its main attraction is related to the 'feel good' effect of the event based on its energy and entertainment value. However, within the last two years, the audiences have declined by about 25%. This trend is believed to be a result of competing events and the declining quality of performances that affect the overall production value of the show. To combat this, event organisers have introduced pre and post show elements with popular guest artists to boost attendance. Meanwhile, the number of persons viewing via pay-per-view and live TV/radio broadcasts has been increasing.

Even though the ISM is less dependent on direct government subventions than the NPSF, it still is heavily dependent on private sector sponsorship to fill the lacuna needed to cover production costs. This dependence puts the event in a fairly precarious position on an annual basis since sponsors are not willing to enter into

contracts of more than one year. So, although there is a much greater consilience between culture, business and the artistic aspects of the show, an uneven policy environment and conservative private sector approaches to supporting popular cultural events have conjoined to create a sense of uncertainty that negatively impacts the event's sustainability.

---

## Implications for Policy and Practice

The two events under review operate in the same environment but emphasize two different areas of the event value chain. The NPSF has a mixed approach to audience development. Traditionally, the organisers employed a production-led approach to the event, characterized by an internal focus on the cultural production of steelband music with the knowledge that the core audience would attend. However, more recently that emphasis has turned to growing new audiences whose attraction to the show is not steelband music. Additionally, unpredictable state funding along with the growing rhetoric about self-sufficiency have fostered an increased reliance on private sector sponsorship, has been thwarted by a poorly developed investment regime. For example, sponsors' engagement with the event is limited to 'marketing sponsorship' and 'corporate patronage' arrangements both of which according to McNichols (2014), do not enable high levels of consilience between the areas of art, business and culture. When taken together, these factors have fostered an attitude of short-term profiteering or '*eatin' ah food*<sup>9</sup>' as the *raison d'être* for the show among sponsors and event organisers alike, resulting in growing dissatisfaction among the audiences about the show's direction.

---

<sup>9</sup> This is a local creole phrase, which connotes a very materialistic approach to life, where every decision is guided by short-term desires to make money.



On the other hand, the ISM has consistently adopted a more consumption-led approach where the focus is on understanding its audiences and markets and trying to shape a product in keeping with their tastes and values. In this sense, the ISM has built up a stronger communication bond with its audience through a strategic programme of marketing and promotion. There is also a greater attempt to engage corporate sponsors in partnerships that encourage deeper synergies with the vision, values and voice of the show. However, an operating environment that does not actively incentivize the private sector to invest in the creative economy has created a major barrier to the show's sustainability. Moreover, the lack of any institutional support to develop performance styles and techniques among the new generation of soca artists has resulted in lower quality performances that have directly impacted the show's attractiveness.

In addition to the unpredictable funding environment, the two events also operate within a political environment where certain cultural products are viewed as signifiers of national identity. The importance of this view was not evident in audience responses and suggested that the element of nationalism was not a key driver in attendance decisions. It seems that the need to construct these nationalistic cultural displays is not as appealing or as urgent as it was during the independence era. The findings also showed that the audiences did not ascribe much meaning or value to the competitive aspects of the events. But the competitive aspects remain to satisfy the political ideal that Trinidad and Tobago's carnival is the 'Greatest Show on Earth' and the various monarchs attract a certain cachet as cultural ambassadors especially as they move within the overseas carnival circuit<sup>10</sup>. These aspects also foster the

notion of '*winners and losers*' and encourage formulaic presentations to satisfy the judging criteria. All of these trends have a deleterious effect on the cultural product as they limit the artistic risks that performers are willing to take with their presentations, especially when the stakes to win are so high. For instance, the prizes for the winners were adjusted upwards to TT\$ 2 million or US\$ 312,500.00 in 2011 with the election of a new government and serves as just one example of how the state is implicated in politicizing of the cultural sector. However, the unsustainability of this increase inevitably resulted in a downward adjustment to the current level of TT\$ 1 million one year later.

The preceding discussion has also illuminated how the practices and policies of the state have distorted the production value and consumption patterns of the two shows under review. More importantly, it has shown the state to be the most important actor in the country's creative ecology and actively involved in promoting high levels of resource dependency in the sector. According to Frey (2000:10), state support for these types of signature events is justified because they are closely aligned to a country's identity and are deemed a *public good*. In this way, the state is compelled to provide subsidies because of the perceived value to the national good. Frey also alludes to another challenge with this outlook on events, whereby politicians and other event gate keepers 'personally benefit from good relationships with the festival organisers because they receive free advance tickets and are invited to the trendy social occasions' (*ibid*). In other words, besides the obvious political benefits that such events bestow on governments, they also provide opportunities for social

<sup>10</sup> There are over 50 Trinidad styled carnivals in the Caribbean diasporic communities in North America and the UK.

recognition and prestige among individual gatekeepers.

The political patronage and cultural capital that the state and organisers derive from staging these signature cultural events do not auger well for changing the existing policies and practices. However, the evidence suggests that the cultural ecology in which these two events play a major role will not thrive if the status quo holds. To

thrive in this dynamic global creative economy, creatives need to be in constant communication with their audiences to help them fashion better products, gain loyalty and ensure a more sustainable cultural industry sector. All of these trends suggest the need for flexibility in operations that must be supported by an enabling policy environment and a freedom to develop art and culture beyond the strictures of national identity politics.

---

## References

- Abercrombie, Nicholas., Longhurst, Brian, 1998. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: Sage.
- Faulkner, Herbert., Fredline, Elizabeth., Larson, Mia., Tomljenovi, Renata, 2010. A Marketing Analysis of Sweden's Storsjöyran Music Festival. *Tourism Analysis*, 4, 157-71.
- Frey, Bruno, 2000. *The Rise and Fall of Festivals: Reflections on the Salzburg Festival*. University of Zurich: Working Paper Series, Institute for Empirical Research in Economics.
- Getz, David., Andersson, Tommy, Larson, Mia, 2007. Festival Stakeholder Roles: Concepts and Case Studies. *Event Management*, 10, (2/3), 103-122.
- Hede, Annmarie, 2008. Managing Special Events in the New Era of the Triple Bottom Line. *Events Management*, 11, (1-2), 13-22.
- James, Vanus, 2014. *Carnival Industry Development Program for Trinidad and Tobago*. Tunapuna, Trinidad and Tobago: Vanus James Investments Limited.
- McNicholas, Bernadette, 2015. Arts, Culture and Business: A Relationship Transformation, a Nascent Field. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 7, (2),
- WIPO, 2017. *How to make a living in the Creative Industries*. Geneva, Switzerland.
-

## A Photo/Audio Journalistic Snapshot of Three Decades of London's Notting Hill Carnival.

**Omar El-Houni**

Notting Hill Carnival Infocus

[www.omarinfocus.com](http://www.omarinfocus.com);

Email: oinfocus@gmail.com; Tel: 07973 383 448

### Abstract

Notting Hill Carnival (NHC) was transported to London by Trinidadians; first as an indoor carnival (1959-1964) by Claudia Jones and indirectly through Rhaune Laslett's 'Notting Hill Fayre' in 1964-1966. In a moment of inspiration and spontaneity, Russell Henderson took his steelband away from Laslett's festival and on to the streets of Notting Hill and initiated one of the most remarkable, grandiose street carnivals in the world today. From a mere handful of revellers, NHC grew exponentially to one of the largest street festivals in the world, currently drawing in some 2 million people annually over two days. Like most carnivals, its origin is embedded in adversity, in this case the abolition of slavery in 1834-8, when slaves masqueraded to mimic and deride their former plantation masters. Similarly, Notting Hill Carnival arose as an antidote to the racial violence, riots and murders perpetrated by some of Britain's Far Rights groups on Caribbean immigrants who were settling into the Notting Hill and North Kensington area in the 1950-60s. From intermittent periods of direct confrontation with the police, NHC has gradually taken on a new ideology and is now expanding in diversity as London's large ethnic communities become an integral part of this street theatre. This project charts the history of NHC from 1990 through a photojournalistic medium. The author grew up in Libya and from childhood was engrossed in the "*Shish Bani*" festival that took place annually in his hometown of Houn. Moving to London in 1988, he was awestruck by parallels between both festivals and began capturing images of NHC annually. He soon became an official photographer and amassed a collection of >10,000 images of the people and performances that are so unique to NHC. The project captures a cross-section of the rich tapestry of NHC, focusing on the three major elements of the native NHC, Mas, Calypso and Steelpan and also includes interviews with some of carnival's early pioneers, most of whom are, unfortunately, now deceased.

**Key Words:** Photojournalism, NHC-Infocus, Images, Exhibitions, Archives, Audio Interviews.

### Introduction

#### Carnival in Trinidad Post-Emancipation – World War II - VE Day.

The notion of playing mas as part of a masquerade (mas) band dates back to post-emancipation in Trinidad. Drums were banded as an accompaniment, so locals turned to bamboo (tamboo bamboo) to

provide the rhythm. Playing mas was considered a triumph of freedom by the then ex-slaves and they deliberately introduced satire to vent their feelings, imitate the European elite class and employed costumes and paraded as mas bands. This became more sophisticated and transfigured annually up to 1939 before it was banned by the British colonial government to mark the start of World War II (WWII) (Cowley, 2008). During this period of quiescence for the carnivalists,

steelpan musicians were experimenting energetically and came out of the war with a new sound, the birth of the steelband in its rudimentary form (Steumpfle, 1995). The 1945 end-of-war celebrations (VE Day), provided an opportunity for pannists to publicly show-off their instruments, playing nursery rhymes and very simple tunes that the musical notes afforded them. By 1946, steelbands were so advanced that they could play recognisable pieces which astonished onlookers and so a gradual process of public acceptance began. The inclusion of the Steelband into carnival parades was incisive and would be adopted intact by the diaspora in later years as post-war immigration to the USA, Canada and Britain began in the 1950s.

---

### **British Nationality Act 1948, Empire Windrush and the Influence of Cricket.**

War-torn Britain urgently needed help to rebuild a devastated country and turned towards the British Commonwealth for cheap sources of labour (Harris, 1993). Parliament passed the 'British Nationality Act' in 1948, allowing British Commonwealth immigrants to settle and work in the UK without previous restrictions (Dabydeen, 2010). After the war, many former West Indian servicemen returned to Britain with the hope of rejoining the RAF while others decided to make the journey to search for a new future. Advertisements were placed in Caribbean newspapers such as the Trinidad Guardian, inviting immigrants to come to Britain under a new scheme that provided cheap transport to the mother country. The first wave of immigrants arrived on board the Empire Windrush at Tilbury on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1948, bringing 492 hopeful immigrants (BBC News, 2012, British Pathé News, 1948). Among them were calypsonians Lord Kitchener, Lord Beginner and the then lesser known, Lord Woodbine. Optimism

for a new life in the mother country was fueled by an initial warm welcome, help with new jobs, accommodation and opportunities to bring their families and educate them. Kitchener contrasted life in Britain to the colour-bar and racist policies of the USA and eloquently sang:

“...To live in London you are really comfortable,

Because the English people are very much sociable ....” (BBC 2020).

Although West Indians (W.I.) came from the same corner of the globe, each island had its own history, vernacular and social dynamics. Meetings among W.I. were good-natured, curious and inquisitive but the community was still incongruent.

The unifying force among West Indians living in this large unfamiliar, unforgiving metropolis was cricket and to beat the mother country at the home of cricket, Lords, was the ultimate dream of every W.I. immigrant (James, 1963). Unlike previous test series in Britain where W.I. crowd support was sparse, the arrival of significant numbers of Caribbean immigrants post-WW II would be a significant boost to a young West Indian team that were about to descend on England for the 1950 Test Series. The series got off to a bad start for the tourists who lost at Old Trafford on 12<sup>th</sup> June by 202 runs (Frindall, 1995). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Test at Lords was set for 24-29<sup>th</sup> June and for the first time, W.I. would have a formidably turn out of supporters, among them Lords Kitchener and Beginner. They sang, danced and cheered every run and every wicket taken by their team who in turn were inspired by their tumultuous support and responded with fortitude (Williamson, 2006). The West Indies sensational 326-run victory on 29<sup>th</sup> June at Lords had to be celebrated by their jubilant fans and began with Lord Beginner's spontaneous composition '*Cricket, Lovely Cricket*'. However, it was Lord Kitchener's



response that is still talked about today. He began playing his guitar and led scores of ecstatic supporters around the cricket field, then through Lord's Main Gate and into central London to Piccadilly Circus. Kitchener recalled that people stared out of their windows in amazement at this utterly bizarre spectacle and continued "... and we're dancing Trinidad-style, like mas, and dance right down Piccadilly and around" (Williamson, 2006). West Indies went on to win the Test series 4-1. (Frindall, 1995). With nearly 30% of the supporters from the Caribbean and such a huge margin of victory, this cricket series was seen as the launchpad to West Indians finding cohesion and self-esteem to begin expressing themselves collectively in their new homeland and indirectly helped to reduce racial tension in Britain (James 2013).

The author did not grow up in the Caribbean and was particularly curious about Kitchener's sojourn with his band of revellers from Lords Cricket Ground (north London) to central London on 29<sup>th</sup> June and interviewed several W.I. on his *modus operandi*. While it was great fun for newly arrived immigrants to celebrate such a momentous event on the streets of central London, it required taking huge risk and revealed one of the obstinate traits of W.I. viz. *'party on the street and worry about the consequences later on'*. Minor incidences like this, even in Trinidad and Tobago resulted in zero tolerance by the police and culminated in arrest, charges even imprisonment. A similar impulsive response 16 years later, this time by Russell Henderson would kick-off one of the largest and most recent street-theatre festivals globally, the inimitable Notting Hill Carnival. While Jamaicans and most W.I. appear to prefer to celebrate in a fixed place with static sound systems, Trinidadians typically celebrate through street parades, a trait that goes back to the earliest carnivals of post-emancipation and is intrinsically retained in the DNA of its compatriots (per.com - Russell Henderson,

Haroun Shah, Lawrence Noel, Lincoln Rahamut, Vernon Williams).

---

## The Early 1950s; The Carnival Arts Landscape of London.

The 1948 arrival of the S.S. Empire Windrush in London was broadcasted widely by British Pathé News (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F6lsLRdZ-o>) and shown in cinemas in the Caribbean. It presented a positive image of life in London and featured Lord Kitchener singing "*London is the place for me*"; motivating many others to undertake the two-week journey across the Atlantic. On board one of these ships in 1950 were two young budding writers, George Lamming (Barbados) and Samuel Selvon (Trinidad) who met on board and even shared a typewriter. Two of their books, Lamming's "*The Emigrants*" (1954), and Selvon's "*The Lonely Londoners*" (1956) gained instant international acclaim and although fictional, provided vivid accounts of the lives of W. I. during these early testing days. The following year, the young pianist, Russell Henderson and T.A.S.P.O. (Trinidad All-Steel Percussion Orchestra) arrived separately in London and would add to the incremental art of the growing pool of artists (Ferris, 2010). Henderson came initially to study but soon left for a more fulfilling call as a jazz musician in London's West End clubs. TASPO on the other hand was formed in Trinidad to participate in the 1951 'Festival of Britain' centenary celebrations. TASPO performed on the banks of the Thames, a newly developing area for culture and arts at London's South Bank, outside the Festival Hall, on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1951 and later on BBC and elsewhere in Britain and Paris to rapturous audiences which included members of the Royal Family. Its reciprocal impact was immense (Nathanie, 2006). In Britain, it brought a new musical sound to an international audience and added

novelty and respect for the resourcefulness of the Caribbean. TASPOs return to Trinidad on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1951 was euphoric and a catalyst for major developments in the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago (Blake, 1995). However, TASPOs, members, Sterling Betancourt and Philmore “Boots” Davidson saw a brighter future in Britain and stayed back in London (Blagrove, 2014). Betancourt would soon locate Russell Henderson and with Max Cherrie they formed ‘The Russ Henderson Steelband’ in 1952 (When Steel Talks, 2016; La Rose, 2004; Spark, 2015). They in turn linked up with Kitchener and, in separate cabaret acts, soon introduced steelpan into their performances. This attracted large audiences and provided stable jobs for several years, but these extraordinary musicians and singers wanted to impose a stronger presence of their own music and culture in London. With the increased presence of other calypsonians such as Lord Invader, Lord Beginner and the Young Tiger also struggling to imbed calypso into London, the arrival of the Mighty Terror to London in 1953 was considered a huge boost (Leeds Mas Media, 2018). However, his poignant calypso 1954 “*No Carnival in Britain*” summed up the frustration and the impending racial tensions in Britain during this period.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYrDrFYntCk>)

---

### **No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs’ and the Dawn of Notting Hill Carnival.**

By the mid-1950s, many immigrants were settled in London with young families but their aspirations and optimism for a more enriched and secure life soon faded (Moore, 2013). The areas they could afford to live such as Notting Hill, North Kensington and Brixton were already decrepit and battered and domiciled by a society stratified by race and class, including the impoverished white

working class (Cohen, 1983). Social and racial tensions grew and were exploited by Far-Right groups such as the ‘White Defense League’ who mounted a “**Keep Britain White**” campaign. Shop windows, pubs, newsagents and rented houses posted up signs - “**No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs**”. West Indians were harassed and arrested by police for simply walking in the streets during late evenings. This culminated in the race riots of 1958 with police employing ‘Stop and Search’ tactics almost solely on black residences (Gutzmore, 1982, 1993). This exacerbated the situation and prolonged the riots for about two weeks before it was possible to walk the streets again (Blagrove, 2014). However, after the riots quelled, the daily lives of black residents were continually aggravated and heinous crimes in less conspicuous places went unreported or uninvestigated (Gutzmore, 1983). Nevertheless, this did not deter the arrival of more immigrants from the Caribbean including more musicians, singers, costume and mas designers, writers, painters and a plethora of artists. They were vocal and built upon the strong foundation of earlier musicians, artists and writers of the pre-Windrush era (Cowley, 2018). They expressed themselves through various forms of media using both local and Caribbean subjects at home. Calypsonians for example charted their lives and experiences in London, recoding songs on political topics such as the break-up of the W.I. Federation, the Queen's Coronation, the devastating Jamaican Hurricane or the birth of the state of Ghana. Recordings also included the more traditional satirical, good-humoured commentary on bizarre aspects of their new daily lives such as ‘Nosy English Landladies’ and ‘English Housewives’, inserting money into a ‘Hot Water Geezer’ for a bath, ‘Dogs and Pets’ (Bulldog don’t bite me’), ‘Riding the Underground’, ‘Lyons Corner Houses’, ‘The Weather’, ‘Mixed Marriages’ (Beginner's Mix Up Matrimony), race and those who vainly try to pass as a European (Kitchener's "You

can't get away from the fact; If you aren't white, you considered black").

Calypso and steelpan arts were strengthened by renowned artists such as Cy Grant, Nadia Cattouse, Pearl Prescod, Edric Connor and Pearl Connor, Nina Baden-Semper, Corrine Skinner-Carter, Mustapha Matura, Bascoe Holder etc while novelists George Lamming, V. S. Naipaul, Andrew Salkey, E. R. Braithwaite and Jan Carew were well known in society. However, the community needed leadership to neutralise their hostile climate and this would soon arrive. Trinidadian-born Claudia Jones's deportation from Harlem, USA to London was meant to curb her anti-racist activities (coined 'communist activities') in the USA. When she arrived into an unsettled London in December 1955, her health was failing appreciably due to the woeful treatment she endured in US prisons. She was expected to simply live out her days in London but instead she worked incessantly until her death in December 1964. However, during this short period of her life in London, she became a towering figure. She transformed the lives of W.I. immigrants and brought arts to the forefront of the Afro-Asian Caribbean peoples. Recognising the urgent need for communication, she established the 'West Indian Gazette' (WIG) in Brixton where the 'British Union of Fascists' frequented and intimidated black residents. As a veteran and charismatic campaigner, WIG "... did more business meetings with worried Blacks than did the (government's) Migrants' Service Department" (Hinds, 2008). So well read was WIG that even the prime ministers of Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana etc visited the offices of this new paper to acknowledge the impact their work (Hinds, 2008).

In 1959, the callous and public murder of the young Antiguan, Kelso Cochrane on 17<sup>th</sup> May in Notting Hill's Southam Street reignited the violence between black and white groups. His funeral on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1959 drew in vast crowds, "*both black and white*

*people attended as a symbol of defiance and unity against racism ...*" (Eddie Adams, p36, in Blagrove, 2014). Sensing a need for compromise, the ever-astute Jones called a meeting in December 1958 to "*wash the taste of Notting Hill out of our mouths*" (Hinds, 2008). Jones called for suggestions during the meeting and a response to hold a carnival in the middle of winter by a Trinidadian prompted loud laughter. However, Jones did not dismiss this but instead saw this as a potential powerful antidote to the racial violence. She regarded carnival as a vibrant celebration of black freedom in the Caribbean and so the celebrated indoor carnivals (West Indian Gazette Caribbean Carnival) began at St Pancras Town Hall in January 1959 and continued to her death in 1964 (Hinds, 2008). The Mighty Terror marked the occasion with a searing impact on the event with his "*Carnival at St. Pancras*". Many of the artists named above participated and even drew in the Mighty Sparrow from Trinidad – who met Kitchener for the first time there.

Like WIG, establishment of a Trinidadian carnival could have dissolved after her death, had it not been for Rhaune Laslett's Notting Hill Street Fayre project. This grew out of Laslett's Children's Play Group and the London Free School project "*to promote cooperation and understanding between people of various races and creeds through education and through working together*" (Moore, 2013). It was essentially a neighbourhood community centre that was intended to familiarise local residents with each other's culture and customs and inject peace, cordiality and joy into a depressed atmosphere. It also aimed to change the poor image of Notting Hill, regarded by newspapers as a "den of prostitution, drug addiction, crime and potential extremism" (Moore, 2013). The conservative council, 'Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)' supported the project with a grant and included transport to take participating groups around.

The "Notting Hill Fayre and Pageant" was held over a week from 18<sup>th</sup> September 1966 and featured several costume bands such as Elizabeth I, Charles Dickens characters, London Irish girl pipers, a West Indian New Orleans-style marching band, Ginger Johnson's Afro-Cuban band, and the Russell Henderson's Trinidadian Steelband, which included Sterling Betancourt, Mervyn Constantine, Vernon "Fellows" Williams, Fitzroy Coleman and Max and Ralph Cherrie (Portobello Film Festival-1966, 2008). Henderson told 'The Guardian' that the atmosphere didn't feel dynamic enough and thought "*we got to do something to make this thing come alive*" (Younge, 2001). This translated into an impromptu procession through the streets, led by the distinctive beat of his steelband to "*Don't Stop the Carnival*". Henderson recalls "*There was no route, really – if you saw a bus coming, you just went another way.*" The spectacle was hypnotising and innovative and transformed the Fayre into the annual Notting Hill Carnival. Others such as Vernon Williams, Zigilie Constantine, Philmore 'Boots' Davidson, Victor Critichlow, Selwyn Baptiste, Eamon Thorpe, Hockey Man, Big George, Herman and Elma Betancourt, Cyril Khamai, Brian Henderson, Kass Mathias, Ken and Cynthia Thomas, Gerald 'Castro' Irish, Steve Kaliper, Horace Ove, Errol Phillip, Wack Young, Miguel Barradas, Pedro Burgess and Bertrand Parris would soon join Russell Henderson and Sterling Betancourt. Over the years NHC has grown in prominence to become a symbol of fortitude and pride of West Indian culture and identity in Britain and will be sorely missed as an essential summer fixture in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic's ban on public mass gatherings. Table 1 gives an overview of the key developments in NHC since its commencement.

---

## Photojournalism and Notting Hill Carnival

When one interviews pioneering figures of NHC to unravel its history, reliance is placed on the memory and predisposition of the individual to his or her affiliation/s. When this is probed deeper to ascertain facts and corroborate findings with others who were involved, the data may be skewed and requires deconvolution to assemble the most plausible scenario. Wyn Baptiste's BBC documentary "*Who Started It? Notting Hill Carnival*" began as a journey to confirm his father's (Selwyn Baptiste) role as "*the man who started (Notting Hill) Carnival*" (Baptiste, 2014). He discovered that although his father did play a pivotal role in the initiation of NHC, the truth was immensely complex and NHC was in fact brought together by a myriad of events, people and situations. Whether it is steelpan, calypso or mas, all aspects of the history of NHC are fraught with contrasting arguments on dates, places and people's perceptions, largely because so much of NHC has been documented well after events had taken place. Photographic evidence is a powerful record of the past, especially when images carry a date and a recognisable place. It resolves controversies and serves as powerful documentary evidence to help build up an accurate history of this world-renowned street carnival. The illuminating book, "*Carnival a Photographic and Testimonial History of the Notting Hill Carnival*" (Blagrove, 2014) does exactly this and provides elegant, vivid images of the history and people of NHC. Although published in 2014, images cover the period up 1979 (with two in 1986) and emphasises the huge time-lag and difficulties in publishing such books. The process is therefore transitory and needs a constant stream of dedicated photojournalists to capture each era of the NHC that is continually changing and interacting with





Figure 1. Grenfell Tower in Notting Hill showing flames on the morning after the fire started. From a local resident.

its environment while also striving to stay solvent in the midst of annual challenges.

The Grenfell Tower fire on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, the 72 deaths and untold devastation of the community served as a grim reminder of the turbulent history and roots of this carnival (Fig. 1). A largely gentrified and affluent community has gradually replaced the impoverished community of the 60s-70s when NHC began. Simultaneously, the borough (RBKC) has grown in statute while its lower socioeconomic class is now less visible and unnoticed today. The Grenfell disaster, however, showed how much of the community still lives below the poverty line in this Borough, but encouragingly support for them has been overwhelming. There were suggestions to postpone the carnival on 27-28<sup>th</sup> August 2017 to mourn the huge loss of lives and the many residents who were made homeless. However, the families and local residents demanded that the carnival went ahead. NHC has recognised and acknowledged the immense support of Notting Hill communities in carnival and paused at 3pm each day of carnival since Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2017 for 3-minute silence to mark this tragic moment. Photographic evidence of this and related activities are significant moments in the history NHC that needs to be captured for posterity and to help share the pain of this catastrophic event with the community and with visitors and



Figure 2. Above: Nostalgia and Pan Nectar Steelbands (below) following Russell Henderson's funeral cortege. (photograph - H. N. Shah)

participants of NHC annually, perhaps through exhibitions and short films.

The NHC community has over the years continued to pay enormous respect to the passing of its members and turn out *en masse* to receptions, funerals and celebratory events (Fig. 2). The passing of NHC's legend and pioneer, Russell Henderson on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2015 was a departure from tradition. The NHC parade on 30<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> August saw bands carrying large images and paintings of Russell Henderson on their vehicles to commemorate his pioneering work for NHC and the Caribbean community over the years which became a central theme of NHC 2015 (see figure below). His funeral



Figure 3. Vivid images to acknowledge the tragic Grenfell Tower disaster and loss of lives (above) and a celebration of Russell Henderson's life (right) during Notting Hill Carnival. Photos from INFOCUS [www.omarinfocus.com](http://www.omarinfocus.com)

took place on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and was celebrated as a carnival on the streets of London. The two steelbands that Henderson founded, Nostalgia Steelband and Pan Nectar merged together for the day. This was boosted by the addition of other pannists and friends from various parts of the UK and the Continent who brought their steelpans and drums for the procession. The bands used Henderson's own arrangement of 'Don't Stop the Carnival' and 'When the Saints Go Marching' as the 'hearse', a brightly decorated Volkswagen camper van (see Figs. 2 and 4), led the celebrations. This was driven by his two sons, Angus and



Figure 4. Cyril Khamai – lifelong friend of Russ Henderson at his funeral. Khamai is also a pioneer of NHC and steelpan innovator.

Pablo on its two-hour journey to the farewell service. Mas designers Clary Salandy and Michael 'Speedy' Ramdeen of 'Mahogany Carnival Design' displayed a delicate, celestial towering mas figure of a 12 ft. tall by 10 ft. wide 'White Angel' that travelled with the steelband on his final destination.



When the procession reached the West London Crematorium, the heavenly figure sat triumphantly on the bright green lawn in front of the crematorium, while the steelband gave thanks for Henderson's life and touched the hearts of all with an impassioned rendition of 'How Great Thou Art' (per. com. Haroun Shah).

Both these examples are peripheral to the core representation of NHC but are integral to its history. In both cases, the powerful images captured are 'stand-alone' narratives and often tell their own stories of individuals, consequences, different phases and the aftermath. In recent years large corporations such as the BBC are invited by the organising body for a Press Launch at the Tabernacle to "help document and witness its future metamorphosis" (Christie, 2018). The Press therefore has a meaningful presence at NHC but with the carnival now so large, coverage will only capture a cross-section of events as most are done from stationary locations. Hence, there is room for the amateur photojournalist to mingle among the bands and off the main parade routes and stages to capture key elements of carnival. This project set out to do so in 1990 with the aim of recording such activities and making them available to both the public and researchers.



## Notting Hill Carnival ‘Infocus’. Three Decades of Visual Statements.

Much has been written about the history of Notting Hill Carnival through newspapers, excellent periodicals such as ‘Pan Podium’ and ‘SocaNews’, proceedings and presentations at conferences and a number of authoritative books. A more recent trend has been the number of university students who are undertaking research and documenting aspects of NHC through post-



graduate theses. The present project serves to augment existing documents and support research by providing visual and audio documentation of NHC over three decades. Many of the students (per com. Haroun Shah) are from local, non-Caribbean background and are drawn in by some elements of carnival that engages them. Others are overseas, from counties mainly in Latin America, Africa, the Middle and Far East where a local festival may have parallels with NHC and are keen to participate and learn more.

My own attraction and involvement commenced soon after my arrival in London in 1988 and was introduced to NHC by a friend. My experience in London was typical of the hostility bestowed to a newly arrived immigrant but, like so many before me, NHC was warm, friendly and inviting. It was made even more significant when I first saw the carnival because it deeply reminded me of my childhood in Libya when I participated in "*Shish Bani*", an annual festival in my hometown of Houn. Regarded as the city of culture and capital of the Jufra District, Houn is an oasis town in the northern Fezzan region of southwest Libya. The city hosts the International Autumn Tourism Festival, at the beginning of October. The festival contained many different activities related to folklore, music and theatre from all over Libya, as well as exhibitions, collectibles, games, folk costumes, equestrian shows, cultural events and seminars.

"*Shish Bani*" (see figures to left) coincides with a religious event called "Ashura" that is linked to hardship and sadness and strives to restore joy and compassion, the same ethos of NHC. It starts with artists dressed in costumes that they craft from palm reeds and husk and decorate beautifully with seashells and crafted metal pieces. The rhythmic drumming and percussion motivate participants to dance and parade through the narrow streets. Children and adolescences gather and join the singing,

stopping outside homes and shops and are given food, beans and coins. In Trinidad, masqueraders such as ‘devils, ‘robbers’ and ‘Red Wild Indians’ stopped outside homes and shops and collected money by a similar means in the early carnivals (Minshall, 1985). Sadly, Libya is torn apart by war and extremists’ groups have made many traditional festivals such as “*Shish Bani*” impossible. My vision is to see ‘*Shish Bani*’ brought to NHC one day. With such a passion for NHC, it was natural to take up my camera and start recording this delightful street festival in my new hometown. The archive is now substantial and has been presented at the following:

1. Calypso with Dignity Exhibition, The Yaa Centre, London, January 1996
2. Calypso with Dignity Exhibition, University College of Leeds, January 1996
3. Black & Wired Carnival Exhibition, Artezium, Luton, 1999
4. On Route: The Art of Carnival, Swiss Cottage library, 2005
5. National Carnival Seminar, Camden Centre, London, October 2009. By Global Carnival Centre and Combined Arts Services.
6. Permanent Exhibition at The Yaa Centre, London
7. On Route: The Art of Carnival Book, Publisher: The X Press, Jun 2003
8. Photos from the archive have been published in for various British and foreign newspapers and magazines. The list includes The Evening Standard, The Independent, Holland Herald, Al Quds Al Arabi, Asharq Al Awsat etc.
9. El-Houni, Omar (2018) Notting Hill Carnival Infocus. Exhibition. 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Steelpan Conference, London 19-21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018 titled: “Empowering the Youth to

Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; Celebrating Windrush 70”.pp.41

10. Permanent Exhibition at The Cardinal Hume Centre, London.

#### **Links to the Project Website:**

<https://oinfocus.wixsite.com/infocus>

#### **Website:**

<https://omarinfocus.com/>

---

## **Conclusion**

Carnivals’ have had a long presence in Britain, the ‘Bridgewater Carnival’ for example dates back to the ‘Gunpowder Plot of 1605’. It is renowned for its brilliant illuminations and was lit by gas-lamps up to 1881 until it gradually changed fully to electric lights by 1913 (Lawrence and Lawrence, 2005). The carnival takes the form of an illuminated parade with stunning displays and, bands such as Nostalgia Steelband and Mas Bands for example ‘Masquerade 2000’ from NHC have actively participated over the years. Because carnivals are so enjoyable and blithe, they are subjected to exploitation and run the risk of antipathy with the law. Carnivals were common in Britain for centuries and some such as the Bartholomew Fair and Southwark Fair in the 18th century were moments of great festivity and release. “*There were juggling, pickpocketing, whoring, drinking, masquerade - people dressed up as the Archbishop of Canterbury and indulged in vulgar acts*” (Dabydeen, 2010). It was eventually banned for “*moral reasons and for the antiauthoritarian behaviour that went on like stoning of constables*” (Dabydeen, 2010). Notting Hill Carnival has had its own adversity to contend with, in this case fuelled by the frustration of black youths who were subjected to daily racial prejudice, harassment by the constabulary, unjust treatment and



intimidation (Moore, 2013, Gutzmore, 1982, 1993, La Rose, 2004). This was acknowledged in both the Scarman Report (1981) and Macpherson Report (1999) that followed enquiries into the riots and has done much to ease, but not remove, institutional racism (Dabydeen, 2010, James, 2013).

Trinidad and Tobago's world renowned carnival artist, Peter Minshall states "*The problems of mankind arise from, or remain unresolved because of, differences, unconnectedness, divisiveness, conflict*" and cites '**Art**' as the highest form of communication to overcome this fear and ignorance that continues to reap havoc even in a modern civilised world (Minshall, 1985), in my case, in my own homeland of Libya. Nowhere is Minshall's profound proclamation better declared than at the vibrant NHC that has now acquired the status as peak of the British Summertime celebrations. However, the community that gave us this carnival and, grew it from a mere handful of protagonists to two million today, has always had to respond to constant threats to sustain it. The dynamic relations between its cultural forms, confrontation between the youth and police and political movement fluctuate over periods (Cohen, 1983). Incredibly NHC has survived intact as a two-day street carnival since its inception in 1966, with only one cancellation in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. This pause in activity provides a period to reflect on how NHC may continue to advance. Evolution is intrinsically a process that optimises a biological species' survival through natural selection and NHC bears the same principles. While organisers have established policies and laid down rules over the years, it is the artists, the grassroots enthusiasts and practitioners who steers its course, sometimes unconsciously, evolving through 'natural selection'. Thus, from a purest carnival of Trinidad, incorporating all the elements of its bearer such as Panorama, a two-day street parade,

J'Ouvert, steelbands playing calypso and various genres of music from Trinidad, Calypso and Soca Monarch competitions and Mas figures based on those used in Trinidad and Tobago for competition, the diaspora initially broadened its base to include the rest of the Caribbean, notably the powerful music of Jamaica which strengthened its base. Soon other islands such as Barbados, Antigua, St. Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, Dominica, St Kitts etc took on a more affirmative role and have added immensely to the depth and colour of NHC.

More recently, the presence of Latin American bands, particularly Brazilian samba bands, are diversifying NHC in a way that mirrors the cosmopolitan make-up of the metropolis. So pronounced has their involvement been, that from 2018, separate adjudicators have been introduced at NHC to judge the competitions among Brazilian bands. This is likely to act as a catalyst for other ethnic minorities, now part of the fabric of the community, to participate by introducing their own cultural heritage and expanding the overall artistic splendour of this incredible all-inclusive street theatre. As a youngster who grew up in the carnival "*Shish Bani*" in my city of Houn, Libya and who is thoroughly hypnotised by NHC, my vision is to see the simple, natural artistic beauty "*Shish Bani*" and similar carnivals of London's multifaceted diaspora, incorporated into the NHC of the future. These carnivals/festivals grew out of pain and anguish, using art as Minshall (1985) states to try to heal its sorrow and misery that they have endured. My homeland, in common with many parts of the world today, is no longer able to celebrate these festivals as they have become offensive to leaders of subversive regimes. Perhaps as NHC evolves, it can be a repository for such ailing festivals. NHC towers above all carnivals, not only in its magnitude, grandeur and as a breeding ground of innovation, but by being able to grow so vigorously and confidently in the very city

and land that enforced slavery upon the forefathers of its Caribbean diaspora - yet rises above this and proudly acts as

flagbearer of its history and a unifying force for peace and harmony in a multicultural world.

Table 1. Notting Hill Carnival from inception to 2020.  
(Its Golden Jubilee was celebrated over three years (2014 - 2016))

Year	Key Developments
<b>1964-1966: Rhaune Laslett</b> (social worker) - she "spoke to the local police about organising a carnival... With more of an English fete in mind..." (Younge, 2002; Spark, 2015).	Local community activist. Main organiser of the "Notting Hill Carnival Fayre and Pageant" to bring together the various local ethnic groups; Ukrainians, Spanish, Portuguese, Irish, West Indians, Cypriots, Greeks, Africans and many mixed races. The 'Russell Henderson Trinidadian Steelband' were playing in a designated area on Acklam Road. During the party, Henderson in a moment of impulse, took his steelband on to the street and was followed by a small crowd. This moment marked the start of the Notting Hill Carnival (per. com - Henderson)
<b>1967: Selwyn Baptiste:</b> NHC organiser/pannist. Youth Educator.	Baptiste – Winner: 1960 - Trinidad Steelpan Soloist Introduced a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Steelband called "Adventure Playground Steelband" – drew in 500 dancing spectators, by 1969, this increased to three and half thousand and 4 steelbands participated (Moore, 2013).
<b>1968:</b> Selwyn Baptiste. Torrential rain	Procession led by a white goat a steelband and a float with Henry VIII and his wives, Pied Piper of Hamelin – lots of W.I. in national costumes - Procession lasted about 3 hours.
<b>1969:</b> Selwyn Baptiste	Three and half thousand participants - four Steelbands including Selwyn Baptiste Adventure Steelband
<b>1970: Selwyn Baptiste</b> Brought the Tabernacle in NHC	During the run-up to the Bank Holiday - in the mid- to late-70s. Metronomes, Ebony Steelband, DJs and Calypsonians brought together. Crowd ~10,000 (per com – Russ Henderson)
<b>1973 - 1975: Leslie Palmer</b> Director NHC	Credited with developing a successful template for NHC and transformed its structure and content (Reggae, Sound Systems etc) introduced. Crowd ~50,000 (per com – Russ Henderson)
<b>1975-1979: Selwyn Baptiste</b>	Baptiste (Chair): founded the Carnival Development Committee. 150,000 now attending. Riots occurred in Notting Hill in 1976 which he strongly condemned. Very derogatory Press reports. Future NHC in jeopardy. <b>Peter Minshall made his debut at NHC and established himself as Mas Band designer.</b>
<b>1989 - 2002: Claire Holder</b>	Holder, highly professional - raised the standard of performances. Professional management systems introduced – public and commercial sponsors, crowds now up to <b>1.5 million</b>
<b>2003:</b> Limited company - Notting Hill Carnival Trust Ltd	Organised NHC. Numbers approached 1.8 million and seem well organised but the Press continued to report only negative aspects of the carnival.
<b>2005:</b> Vernon Shabaka Thompson	Thompson seconded from the Yaa Centre (CEO) - London Notting Hill Carnival now had the strength of Tabernacle to support it – led to the Carnival Village Trust (CVT).
<b>2012 -2017</b>	London Notting Hill Carnival Enterprises Trust (LNNHCET) + Street Event Company. The three-year contract ended, and new bids were invited. CVT - Notting Hill Carnival Board Ltd (NHCL) formed - awarded contract for one year – to organise 2018 carnival.
<b>2018 - 2021</b>	CVT – NHCL bid successful - three-year contract awarded. Police report for 2018 stated it was the most organised carnival since the event began. This was reflected in the BBC and Newspaper coverage which was highly positive for the first time. NHC 2020, postponed due to the coronavirus crisis.

**References:**

- Baptiste, Wyn, 2014. Who Started It? Notting Hill Carnival, BBC iPlayer  
<https://subsaga.com/bbc/documentaries/music/notting-hill-carnival/who-started-it.html>
- BBC News, 2012. Notting Hill Carnival pioneer Selwyn Baptiste dies.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-16434197>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selwyn\\_Baptiste](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selwyn_Baptiste) (Wikipedia)
- BBC Bitesize Articles, 2020. How the Windrush Generation transformed British arts  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6grnrd>
- British Pathé News, 1948. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9F6lsLRdZ-o>)
- Blagrove Jr, Ishmahil, 2014. Carnival a photographic and testimonial history of the Notting Hill Carnival. Rice N Peas, London. ISBN-10: 0954529324
- Blake, Felix, I.R., 1995. The Trinidad and Tobago Steel Pan: History and Evolution. TASPO-  
<http://www.seetobago.org/trinidad/pan/history/bandhist/taspo/dbtaspo.htm>
- Christie, A.C., 2018. Notting Hill Carnival Press Launch 2018. I Love Carnival. Mas Band Launches 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018.  
<http://ilovecarnivall.co.uk/notting-hill-carnival-press-launch-2018/>
- Cohen, Abner, 1983. Drama and politics in the development of a London carnival. (Ed.) Aronoff, Myron J. Culture and Political Change. Political Anthropology. Vol. 2. Transaction Books. New Brunswick (USA) and London (UK). pp.101-126. ISSN:0732 1228
- Cowley, John, 2008. Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making. Cambridge University Press.
- Cowley, John, 2018. Whence the Calypso in Britain? Plenary Lecture, Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Steelpan Conference, London 19-21<sup>st</sup> October 2018 titled: "Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; Celebrating Windrush 70". Pp 11- 12.  
<https://www.steelpanconference.com/7th-conference>.
- Dabydeen, David, 2010. Notting Hill Carnival. Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies, University of Warwick. Knowledge Centre Archive.  
<https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/knowledge-archive/arts/nottinghill/>
- El-Houni, Omar, 2018. Notting Hill Carnival Infocus - Exhibition. Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Steelpan Conference, London 19-21<sup>st</sup> October, 2018 titled: "Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; Celebrating Windrush 70".pp.41
- Ferris, Lesley, 2010. Incremental art: negotiating the route of London's Notting Hill Carnival, *Social Identities*, 16:4, 519-536, DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2010.498185
- Frindall, Bill, 1995. The Wisden Book of Test Cricket, Vol. I: 1877-1977. London: Headline. p. 326. ISBN 0-7472-1117-5.

Gutzmore, Cecil, 1982. The Notting Hill Carnival. *Marxism Today*. Pp.31- 33

Gutzmore, Cecil, 1993. Carnival, the State and the Black Masses in the UK. In: *Inside Babylon, The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*. Eds. Winston James and Clive Harris. Chapter 9, 207 - 230. Published by Verso. London, New York.

Harris, Clive, 1993. Post-war Migration and the Industrial Reserve Army. In *Inside Babylon, The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*. Eds. Winston James and Clive Harris. Chapter 1, pp 9- 54. Published by Verso. London, New York.

Hinds, Donald, 2008. Claudia Jones and the 'West Indian Gazette'. *Race & Class*  
<http://www.irr.org.uk/news/claudia-jones-and-the-west-indian-gazette/>

James, C.L.R., 1963. *Beyond a Boundary*. London: Stanley Paul/Hutchinson

James, Selma, 2013. How *Beyond a Boundary* broke down the Barriers of Race, Class and Empire. *The Guardian*, Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/02/beyond-a-boundary-broke-cricket-barriers>

Lamming, George, 1954. *The Emigrants*. London. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-emigrants-by-george-lamming>

La Rose, Michael, 2004. 40 Years of The Notting Hill Carnival: An Assessment of the History and the Future. <https://web.archive.org/web/20131227192143/http://www.pan-jumbie.com/uploads/papers/40yearsnhc.pdf>.

Lawrence, J. C., Lawrence, J.F., 2005. *A History of Bridgwater*.  
ISBN 10: 186077363X. Publisher: Phillimore & Co Ltd

Leeds Mas Media, 2018. Life in London - Calypso in Britain, 1956 -1959  
<https://leedsmasmedia.wordpress.com/2018/03/29/life-in-london-calypso-in-britain-1956-1959/>

Macpherson Report-Ten Years, 1999. Stephen Lawrence's murder on 22 April 1993,  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/427/427.pdf>

Minshall, Peter, 1985. The Use of Traditional Figures in Carnival Arts. Presentation at the First National Conference on The Performing Arts (23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1985).

Moore, Tony, 2013. *Policing Notting Hill, Fifty Year of Turbulence*. Waterside Press.  
Chapter 7, pp 143-162

Nathanie, Daina Lorraine, 2006. "Finding an 'Equal' place: How the designation of the steelpan as the national instrument heightened identity relations in Trinidad and Tobago", The Florida State University, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

Portobello Carnival Film Festival, 2008. PART 5- 1966 London Free School Michaelmas Fayre. <http://www.portobellofilmfestival.com/talkpics/talk-2008carnival-05.html>



Scarman, Lord, 1981. Commissioned by the UK Government after the 1981 Brixton Riots.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarman\\_Report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarman_Report)

Spark, Stephen, 2015. Russell Henderson - panman, pianist and pioneer'. SocaNews, 23 August 2015.

Selvon, Samuel, 1956. *The Lonely Londoners*, London.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Lonely\\_Londoners](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lonely_Londoners)

Steumpfle, Stephen, 1995. *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago*. Chapter 3, pp 76- 140. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

When Steel Talks, 2016. Russell Henderson - Steelpan Great - Legends.  
<https://www.panonthenet.com/history/uk/russell-henderson-obituary-2016.htm>

Williamson, Martin, 2006. "Those two little pals of mine ...". ESPNCricinfo.com. June 24, 2006. <https://www.espncricinfo.com/magazine/content/story/251196.html>

Younge, Gary, 2002. "The Politics of Partying". *The Guardian*- 17th August 2002.

---

## **Implementing Steelpan Music in Higher Education Programs**

**Dr. Andrew Martin**

Professor of Music, Inver Hills College  
2711 40<sup>th</sup> Ave S, Minneapolis, Minnesota USA  
612-532-6967  
amartin@inverhills.edu

---

### **Abstract**

Upon returning from a visit to Trinidad in 1955, American folk musician, educator, and political icon Pete Seeger announced that the steelpan, a family of musical instruments invented in Trinidad and Tobago in the late 1930s, was “destined to spread to the farthest reaches of the globe.” Now, some sixty-five years later Seeger’s prophecy has been fulfilled, and beyond the Caribbean basin and areas of the Caribbean diaspora (New York, Miami, London, Toronto) the sound and spirit of steelbands have since infiltrated six continents and countless countries across the globe. The first steelbands surfaced in the United States in New York around 1950 performing as extensions of the Caribbean diaspora residing in the region. By the mid-1950s the multifaceted steelpan caught the attention social workers and educators in academic institutions in New York. The first steelband was formed at an American university in 1957 and others shortly followed at universities across the country. No early academic institution-based steelbands (hereafter “academic steelbands”) from the 1950s and 1960s survived more than a few years; however, their importance to the current steelband climate is an important area of investigation. This paper will examine the development and implementation of steelbands in colleges and universities across the United States from 1957 to present. It is my objective to explore the academic steelband scenes in context—at colleges and universities—with the aim of comparing them to academic steelbands in other countries.

---

**Keywords:** Academia, Colleges, Universities, America, United States, Pete Seeger, Northern Illinois University (NIU), Calypso Craze, diversity.

### **Introduction**

Upon returning from a visit to Trinidad in 1955, American folk musician, educator, and political icon Pete Seeger announced that the steelpan, a family of musical instruments invented in Trinidad and Tobago in the late 1930s, was “destined to spread to the farthest reaches of the globe” (Seeger, 1958). Now, some sixty-five years later Seeger’s prophecy has been fulfilled and beyond the Caribbean basin and areas of the Caribbean diaspora (New York, Miami, London, Toronto) the sound and spirit of steelbands have since infiltrated six continents and countless countries across

the globe. The first steelbands surfaced in the United States in New York around 1950 performing as extensions of the Caribbean diaspora residing in the region. By the mid-1950s the multifaceted steelpan caught the attention of social workers and educators in academic institutions in New York. The first steelband was formed at an American university in 1957 and others shortly followed at universities across the country. No early academic institution-based steelbands (hereafter “academic steelbands”) from the 1950s and 1960s survived more than a few years; however, their importance to the current steelband climate is an important area of

investigation. This paper will examine the development and implementation of steelbands in colleges and universities across the United States from 1957 to present (Martin, 2018). It is my objective to explore the academic steelband scenes in context - at colleges and universities - with the aim of comparing them to academic steelbands in other countries<sup>1</sup>.

## Steelpan in Higher Education -A Global Approach

Throughout the Caribbean diaspora, academic institutions in countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom have developed pragmatic structures for teaching steelpan in school systems as part of higher education curriculums. In the United Kingdom, academic institutions started forming steelbands in the 1970s and there are now more than 300 school, university, and community steelbands in the country.



Figure 1. Caption: Hell's Gate Steelpan Academy (2018)

In Antigua and Barbuda, steelbands first formed in 1945 as elements of community engagement and development; however, now in 2020 many of these same legacy steelbands (Hell's Gate (Fig.1), Harmonites, Gemonites, Panache, for example) focus great efforts towards engaging youth participation as over 60% of Antiguan steelband membership is

comprised of players under the age of eighteen.<sup>11</sup> In the United Kingdom, steelpan is an accredited instrument by the OCN (Open College Network) and students can choose it as their primary instrument for Advanced Level college examinations. Similarly, steelpan is one of a select few instruments eligible for Caribbean students in countries such as Antigua, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent to study for their CXC (College Level Examinations). In the United States, however, no similar national standardized examinations exist nor does a tangible and consistent connection between diasporic steelbands and their counterparts in higher education. Unsurprisingly, this disconnect has led to an underutilization of steelpan's dynamism for teaching musical development and cultural expression, stymying its effectiveness in college and university curriculums.

As of the mid-2000s, steelband was the third most common non-Western performing ensemble in American universities and the number has since rapidly expanded. Academic institutions across the United States have started to embrace the instrument's multicultural and musical versatility and there are currently 184 college and university steelbands and over 600 primary and secondary school steelbands in the country (Haskett, 2018; Martin, 2018) Steelbands in academia can be invaluable laboratories for teaching diverse student populations, offering access to arts education for the broadest of student populations. My research suggests that some university administrators and/or music department leaders see value in steelbands and, for one reason or another, covet them enough to invest the capital funds required to purchase the instruments. These enlightened administrators recognize steelband as a valuable educational resource, but many other administrators fail

<sup>11</sup> An earlier version of this paper was read at the 7th Biennial Steelpan Conference (Martin, 2018).

to identify the instrument as a tool able to develop fundamental music skills - such as a strong sense of rhythm - not to mention its capacity to foster a sense of community and cultural appreciation among participants and audiences. The benefits are many, but so are the barriers, which harkens the question: why start a steelband at a higher education institution and what are some of the factors and detractors faced by steelband proponents attempting such an endeavor in the United States over the past decades?

The first documented steelband found at an American university was fostered by Pete Seeger himself at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1957 (Fig. 2). Seeger was a friend of UCLA ethnomusicology Ki Mantle Hood and the former performed on campus numerous times during his blacklisting in the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> Following the steelband at UCLA, others sprouted up shortly thereafter at institutions such as Cornell University in outstate New



Figure 2. Pete Seeger (left) in Beacon, New York (1956) Implementation: Early Examples

York, University of Southern California, and University of Minnesota in the late 1950s.<sup>13</sup> Seeger developed a curriculum for teaching steelpan and later worked with Kim Long Wong to publish their methodology (Seeger, 1964). Another

notable early steelband was the Bomboushay Steelband founded at Michigan State University. Members of the Bomboushay Steelband included the director Gene Bluestein (a Seeger colleague and protégé), American students, several visiting Caribbean international students and the steelband recorded a record on the Folkways label title “Bomboushay Steel Band” (1962). This steelband, too, was short lived and folded when the band’s Caribbean students graduated and Bluestein relocated to California to take a teaching position at California State University-Fresno in 1963 (Russell, 2017-18).



Figure 3. Educational Alliance Steelband (1967)

The open arms of American universities proved a receptive outlet for steelband activity, though initially on a very small scale, following the implosion of the calypso craze and the American public’s waning interest in exotica during the late 1950s (Funk and Eldridge, 2014). From their inception, academic steelbands in the United States have enjoyed seemingly unbridled enthusiasm from proponents and participants alike. Despite the passion, however, early academic steelbands lacked in long-term sustainability. This was a result of three main factors: the availability of quality instruments and qualified individuals to tune them, the overwhelming

<sup>12</sup> Pete Seeger’s father Charles Seeger, a legendary musicologist, joined the faculty of UCLA in 1958.

<sup>13</sup> Gene Bluestein started a steelband at the University of Minnesota while a graduate student, though it’s unclear how long or in what capacity

the band functioned. For more information, see Russell, Melinda 2017-2018)



size of Trinidadian-style steelbands as a pedagogical model, and the lack of qualified instructors in the United States. Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence from Britain in 1962; however, until changes in United States laws that assisted immigration went into effect in 1965, political relations and dialogue between the United States and the newly postcolonial Trinidad temporarily slowed, and in some cases prohibited, university study-abroad programs.<sup>14</sup> The combination of these restrictions helped to disconnect the diaspora steelband scene in New York and Miami from higher education just as it was poised to gain traction in academia.

The early gold standard for academic steelbands in the United States was the program founded by Murray Narell (father of Andy and Jeff Narell) on the Lower eastside of Manhattan in 1962. Murray Narell worked for an organization called the Educational Alliance and was a social worker. Narell was fascinated by the steelpan and implemented a program at several of the settlement houses he worked for in Manhattan. Before long more than a dozen different groups of teenagers began cycling in and out of two separate rooms for daily or weekly steelband rehearsals.

For Narell, the goals of the program, despite the focus on musical skills, were always much greater and aimed to fostering well-balanced adults. *“Ordinarily these youths don’t hope to achieve anything great. They can’t earn praise as students or athletes. But the drums have changed everything. They have acceptance from adult audiences and adulation from teenage-age girls. For the first time in their lives they are winning applause for accomplishments”* (Narell,

1962).

As time went on, Narell’s program grew, and more teachers and steelpan tuners were needed to service the expansive steelband program at the Educational Alliance (see Fig.3). Narell worked closely with the West Indian diaspora community to secure such talented steelpan builders as Jonathan Lewis from the Caribbean Kings, Joe Brown from Kim Loy Wong’s steelband, and other notable tuners including Vincent Hernandez, Patrick Arnold, Cliff Alexis, and Mikey Enoch. When the program’s primary tuner Rupert Sterling returned to Antigua, Narell (with an assist from Admiral Gallery of the US Navy Steel Band) arranged for Ellie Mannette to emigrate to the United States with an H1B visa and take over the program. Despite the talented tuners, teachers, and proximity to the Caribbean diasporic community in New York, the steelband program at the Educational Alliance was ultimately unable to survive its founder’s departure. Murray Narell left New York for California in 1970 and the steelband program lasted a few years longer until the mid-1970s before disbanding. The success of his academic steelbands at the Educational Alliance was remarkable, but they too, were unable to outlive their founder and sustainability was elusive.

The first American steelband at an academic institution to sustain its program in a meaningful capacity was at Northern Illinois University (NIU). The program was started by the late Al O’Connor in 1973, fostered by Trinidadian steelband pioneer Cliff Alexis from 1985-2019, and continues to this day as one of the bastions of steelband excellence in performance, education, and pedagogy the world over.

<sup>14</sup>The most important of these was the Hart-Cellar Act, which abolished the National Origins Formula that restricted the influx of immigrants based on existing percentages of an ethnic group’s population present in the United States at any given time. The

National Origins Formula was first enacted in 1924 and effectively set low immigration quotas for several geographic areas including Eastern Europe and the Caribbean, whose citizens, prior to the act, enjoyed relatively easy immigration access to the United States.

The steelband program at NIU is an example both administratively and pedagogically of sustainable and quality steelpan education. However, the program was not always without its detractors as O'Connor learned first-hand in 1977 at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. O'Connor had just facilitated a steelband workshop and afterwards two influential professors of percussion from reputable universities approached him with congratulations (Fig. 4). However, the pair then proceeded to disparage steelband music and O'Connor's efforts, telling him, "You shouldn't be messing with this [steelband]. It's never going anywhere."<sup>15</sup>

Currently, NIU steelband director Liam Teague is constantly pushing the boundaries of the program and notes that despite the NIU steelband's history of success the program is constantly pushing forward with contemporary steelband music in a variety of genres. *"We hold true to the mantra of learning from the past to inform the future, so our programming is always eclectic, and includes pieces from yesteryear as well as contemporary work."*<sup>16</sup>

## In the Interim

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, steelbands had become integral parts of percussion programs at several colleges and university across the United States. The motivation for these programs varied, and with few notable exceptions, West Virginia University and Florida Memorial University for example, the curriculum was often not comprehensive nor culturally relevant. But should the rich cultural history of steelband be a necessary component of every steelband's educational mission at American academic institutions? Does



Figure 4. Al O'Connor (right) and NIU Steelband (1970s)

implementing a steelband in academia require culturally competent curriculums? Or is the steelpan, for these academic programs, at its core mean something else than it does for the Caribbean diaspora community? At the University of Minnesota based in the less-than-Caribbean northern outpost of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Director of Percussion Studies Fernando Meza describes in a poignant way his reason for starting a steelband, noting *"We live in a global climate and it is our ability as individuals to understand and be able to function in this climate. Steel drums are just another tool in the toolbox for us as musicians. Being able to tie the cultural side of things may be the difference between getting or not getting a job."*<sup>17</sup>

Meza is not alone in feeling that the survival of his percussion graduates as working musicians depends in large part on an exposure and general knowledge of steelpan and other non-western styles of music. After all, paid orchestral timpani work for professionals, no less students, is few and far in between and contemporary marimba even less so. Working percussionists across the country are seeing

<sup>15</sup> Al O'Connor, interview by Andrew Martin and Ray Funk, April 6, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Email from Liam Teague to Andrew Martin, October 10, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Fernando Meza, Interview with the Andrew Martin, October 1, 2004.

the demand for world percussion skills as a growing trend. The University of Minnesota launched its first steelband in 2002, and, utilizing the model of visual promotion pioneered by the Trinidad All-Steel Percussion Orchestra in 1951, used the ensemble to draw attention to the University's School of Music. Meza was adamant about the ability of the steelband to bring visibility to the percussion department, and the University of Minnesota beyond campus.

Though he was enthusiastic about the educational benefits of the Steelband, Meza was much more excited about the steelband's capacity to serve as the public face of his percussion department. He is not alone in this regard as Matthew Dudak, director of the University of Akron steelband, looked to the steelband to secure financial donations for the percussion department at Akron in the 2000s (Fig. 5).

Following years of stagnant funds, Dudak's steelband made a Christmas album with all sales proceeds going directly to the percussion department scholarship fund. The realities of music department budgets raise many questions of fundraising and its implication to the educational goals of American steelbands in academia. Furthermore, if the goal of an academic steelband is fiduciary, this may call into question the educational mission of the band and could subsequently have an impact on the pedagogy. Yet, it should further be noted that the *modus operandi* of individual steelband programs might differ conceptually from the comprehensive methodologies of other programs and, as in the case study above, the University of Akron steelband upholds a high level of artistic integrity and their Christmas album is well constructed with exceptional musicality. Does the implementation of

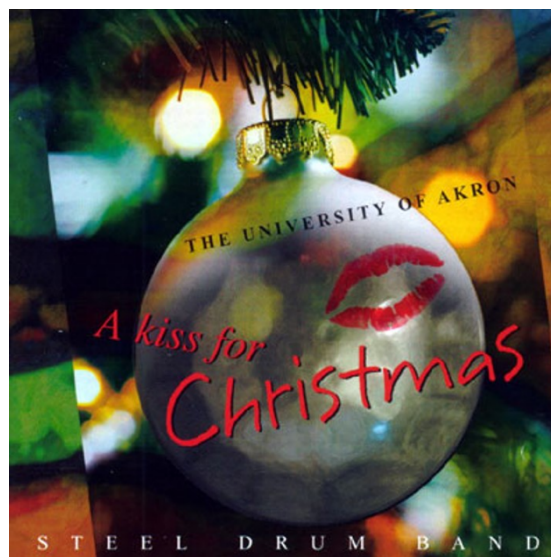


Figure 5. University of Akron Steelband Christmas Album (2001)

their steelband represent cultural appropriation? Or a remade tradition? Or both? And should or does this present a barrier for implementing steelbands across academia?

The impact this fundraising has on the educational mission of American steelbands raises interesting questions regarding repertoire choice. For instance, are “bomb” tunes and other western classical arrangements commercially viable for academic steelbands? Should these classical tunes be used as pedagogical tools for technique and culture study? The educational benefits of a particular steelband, adapted to its population, undoubtedly vary from situation to situation and the implementation of steelband in academia requires grappling with a wide array of diverse situations. For example, in 2018 Adam Brostowitz of Western Illinois University was keen to share his arrangement of Adele’s “Turning Tables” noting proudly “*I arranged it to show the versatility of pan as an ensemble covering voice and piano without an engine room or additional percussion.*”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Facebook post from Adam Brostowitz to Andrew Martin October 2, 2018.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=->

NhU\_YODr0w&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR0pwqOPxWcOjII75aJEtcKUM65TBknA12VZ2TVAo4XzB-OJwG2LKEkMeWg

Compared to any panorama arrangement, there is nothing “traditional” about this arrangement but it serves the arranger and steelband’s goals - however disparate they may be from tradition.

### **Implementing Steelbands: The Present State in Higher education in the United States**

The present state of steelpan education in primary schools, secondary schools, and university steelpan programs in the United States forms a thriving and robust scene: the strongest and most active climate in the steelpan’s sixty-five-year history in the country. Since 2000, steelbands have become increasingly popular additions to higher education and after-school programs throughout the United States and there are now over 600 steelbands in academia. As Dr. Chris Tanner of Miami University of Ohio notes, music education in the United States has historically focused on ensembles of traditional instruments including wind ensemble (band), orchestra, and choir. For Tanner, access to music education is key and he argues “*steelbands can reach students, traditional ensembles cannot*” which includes those from lower socio-economic and those from minority and other key demographics traditionally underrepresented in music education ensemble participation.<sup>19</sup> Institutions are required to purchase steelpans, not individual students, making access to ensemble playing significantly more attractive for many students - a major selling point for implementing steelbands in higher education in the United States.

Despite this success, however positive, obstacles remain in place for intrepid individuals keen on implementing steelbands in academia. Steelbands are expensive, space-needy, and require

dedicated specialist instruction. With competition for funds at higher education institutions fierce, the justification for implementing a steelband is of the utmost importance and when approaching higher education administration (for the first time or the fiftieth) asking to launch a steelband, what would be the selling points? For what reasons would one argue that steelband would be an important element of the school/university/college curriculum? Why should any academic institution choose steelband over another world music ensemble (Gamelan or African drumming for example)?

Challenges for implementing steelbands in academia are many, and include cost of instruments, lack of repertoire and/or qualified specialist instructors, and rehearsal/storage space. Research suggests, however, that beyond these challenges the general best practice for implementing steelbands in academia can be narrowed to the instruments capacity for promoting visibility, music literacy, and ensemble participation. According to C. J. Menge, who directs six different school steelbands and the Inside Out Steelband in Austin, Texas, “*students enrolled in a steelband that emphasizes musical literacy learn a lot of transferable knowledge that they can then take back into other school ensembles (band, orchestra, jazz band, choir, etc.),*” and he further notes that “*many of our students every year are not enrolled in another musical ensemble, and a curricular steelband is an excellent avenue to involve more students from a school's general population in music program.*”<sup>20</sup> For Menge and many other academic steelband directors, the key factor for implementation and sustainability are steelband’s ability to teach music fundamentals and, because of the instrument’s pedagogy of rote learning and music genre adaptability, its capacity to provide access and equity to all students.

<sup>19</sup> Chris Tanner, Interview with Andrew Martin, October 16, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Email from C.J. Menge to Andrew Martin, October 15, 2018.



Northern Illinois University is one of three degree granting institutions in the United States that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in steelpan performance. NIU steelband's director Liam Teague is a highly sought-after clinician throughout the United States and the globe, and his assessment of steelpan programs in higher education describes a scene that is strong and getting stronger. He notes, however, that one of the biggest obstacles to implementing steelband programs in academia is convincing institutions of the profundity and versatility of the steelpan - that is, in terms of expectation and respect, to place the instrument firmly on par with typical western musical instrument, the violin or saxophone for example. In order to achieve this, Teague has adopted a pedagogy that is holistic, including *"improvisation, sight reading, ear training, musicality, arranging, and composing"* and it should not be lost on us all that Teague's list is a combination of traditional and western classical teaching methodologies. Teague and his colleague Yuko Asada further note *"within the context of steelband rehearsals and applied lessons, a great deal of emphasis is placed on students developing a deeper understanding of the music that they are playing and enhancing their analytical skills, generally."*<sup>21</sup> Teague and his NIU colleagues treat steelpan, in the words of the late Ellie Mannette, as a *"serious art form,"* while not eschewing the deep cultural history of the instrument. But for the fledgling steelband in academia, implementing a steelband based on the premise multi-cultural appreciation may, on its own, not be enough to sway skeptical administrations.

In Seattle, Washington, Gary Gibson notes that steelbands are abundant, but sustainability and pedagogical quality is elusive. Gibson founded a non-profit organization (Steel Magic Northwest) to

support academic steelbands and to offer better quality and continuity for the youth participants. *"Until my organization came along,"* Gibson says, *"the best any kid could expect would be to play for maybe a semester in the 6th grade...then, their steelband career would be over. We're changing that!"* Gibson's situation is a cautionary tale for the implementation of steelbands in academia and it was because of situations like his that several steelband directors from across the country formed the National Association of Steelband Educators (NSSBE) to support one another and provide resources for the implementation and sustainability of steelband across the United States.<sup>22</sup> The mission of the NSSBE is to connect steelband educators, foster excellence in the steelband art form by providing resources, professional development, and networking opportunities, to promote greater knowledge, appreciation and support of the steelband community, both among practitioners and the general public, and to honor the cultural heritage and traditions of steelpan and steelbands.

In the United States there is a disconnect between the Caribbean diasporic steelband community and academic steelband community and this unfortunate chasm has, for decades, slowed the development of comprehensive steelband education across the country. NSSBE's coordinated efforts to bridge this chasm, or at least supplement the gaps, is noble. Some of the resources for implementing steelbands include a website rich with content pertinent to youth steelband members and steelband directors alike. Here one can find links for steelband music publishers, indexes of published steelpan research publications, lists and contacts of steelpan tuners, steelpan workshops and camps, solo steelpan repertoire database, masters thesis and dissertation, database, academic steelband

<sup>21</sup> Email from Liam Teague to Andrew Martin, October 10, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see <https://weteachpan.org/>

database, and much more. Beyond this, the NSSBE juries a facebook group of steelband directors that connects over 700 members.

Professor Brandon Haskett, of Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan, is a board member of the NSSBE and has, in addition to directing his own steelband, consulted on the formation of several other steelbands in the region. His advice for anyone attempting to implement a steelband is to always promote the fundamental abilities of the instrument. Noting the rich and complex cultural history of steelbands is effective but Haskett reminds steelband directors to use the instrument to address a wide range of musical genres. This will, in turn, *“bring students in from outside of the department since they have few technical limitations in the beginning such as embouchure, etc.”*<sup>23</sup> Haskett further notes that steelbands *“provide opportunities for improvisation and are a great opportunity for addressing cultural concepts from an area of the world that is typically under-represented (even in university cultural studies programs).”*<sup>24</sup>

---

## Conclusion

Sometime around 1918, New Orleans let go of its cultivated jewel, and the art form of jazz music spread throughout the world and

has since become something else. Born of the city of New Orleans and its confluence of cultures and history, jazz now belongs to the world. In a similar sense, steelband was born in Trinidad and Tobago, but it, too, now belongs to world. And because of this, the goals for its continued growth and sustainability vary through the world - to this reality steelbands in higher education are no exception. The implementation of steelbands in academia in the United States is an evolving process and regardless of the motivations for each new steelband, it is exciting to witness the development of the movement and the cultivation of resources, methodologies, and networking. In the United States, the present state of steelbands in academia finds a generation of directors and students better off than their predecessors. Programs at several key universities such as Northern Illinois University and community-based programs such as Café Steelband (Washington, D.C.), Virginia Rhythm Project (Virginia Beach/Norfolk), and Mosaic Steel Orchestra (Norfolk, Virginia) are making great strides towards continued steelband educational excellence. Look to organizations such as the NSSBE to forge the future of the art form in academia and to further connect steelbands in the academic and diasporic communities.

---

## References

Bomboushay Steel Band, 1962. New York: Folkways Records and Services Corporation.

Funk, Ray and Eldridge, Michael, 2014. Calypso Craze, Bear Family BCD 16947

Haskett, Brandon, 2018. These figures - current as of the original delivery of this paper in October of 2018 - are drawn from Dr. Brandon Haskett's ongoing nationwide steelband survey. For more information, see here <https://blhaskett.wordpress.com/steelpan-research/>

---

<sup>23</sup> Email from Brandon Haskett to Andrew Martin October 11, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Martin, Andrew, 2018. Implementing Steelpan Music in Higher Education. Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Steelpan Conference, London 19-21<sup>st</sup> October 2018 titled: “Empowering the Youth to Lead the UK Transformation of Carnival Arts; Celebrating Windrush 70”. pp 29. <https://www.steelpanconference.com/7th-conference>.

Martin, Andrew, 2018-19. Fieldwork and Analysis of Antigua’s Panoramas from years 2015-2019 (unpublished work).

Narell, Murray, 1962. Steelbands as a Program Activity in the Social Group Work Process as it Affects Decision Making in Groups. Masters Thesis, Adephi College.

Russell, Melinda, (2017-18). “Dinkytown Before Dylan: Gene Bluestein and the Minneapolis Folk Music Revival of 1950s” Minnesota History Magazine, 65, 288-301.

Seeger, Pete, 1958 (Jan. - March). “The Steel Drum: A New Folk Instrument,” The Journal of American Folklore, 71, 52.

Seeger, Peter, 1964. The Steel Drums of Kim Loy Wong; An Instructional Manual to Accompany the Folkways Records FI-8367 and FS-3834 and the Movie, “Music from Oil Drums”. New York: Oak Press, 1964

---