

“White College Boy Steelbands” in 1950s Trinidad:
How Middle-Class Teenagers Helped the Steelpan Gain National Acceptance

by

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ABSTRACT

This document highlights the increased involvement of “college boys” or “white college boys” - better-educated middle-class white and light-skinned persons - in steelbands in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Following an introductory overview of the demography of Trinidad and Tobago, the history of Carnival, and the interregnum of the temporary instruments used between the ban of indigenous drums in the 1880s and the invention of the steelpan at the end of the 1930s, this document will examine the history and membership of these college boy bands, with particular emphasis on the Hit Paraders. Two factors that highlight the vital role played by these college boy steelbands are discussed: commercial sponsorship of bands, and support that bands received from the People’s National Movement Party. A detailed timeline of steelpan invention and innovations is also included.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Mr. Clifford Alexis, who has always told me the truth,
and who has always known my truth. I sought out this truth for you.

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I tell people, I will beat pan...I used to beat pan...You must have feelins, the love of the music and everything? Otherwise it's a waste of time; you just gonna makin' a set a noise.

—Gerald Fernandez

Introduction

The steelpan is one of very few twelve-tone equal temperament acoustic instruments invented in the 20th century. Eleven steelpan voices have been created, and these voices combine into steel orchestras with a typical compass of almost five octaves. Only seventy years after its invention on the tiny island of Trinidad, the steelpan and steelbands have gained global popularity and pan instruments and music have become a prosperous industry. In 1992, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago declared the steelpan to be the nation's official musical instrument, and steelpans appear on the country's twenty-dollar bill.

However, many Americans are surprised when they learn that the Trinidadian government and most of Trinidadian society initially rejected the steelpan and steelbands. The reasons for this rejection are a complex combination of factors relating to race, class, colonialism, and fear. Too often, though, Americans receive (and transmit) an oversimplified explanation for this rejection and its eventual reversal—one in which the tangled web of circumstances under which steelbands gained national acceptance is stripped down to only one or two seminal events. This document will examine the complicated social, political, and musical environment in which the steelpan evolved into both a highly refined musical instrument and a national icon.

Sociologist Dr. William Aho states that the following ten factors contributed to the greater national acceptance of the steelband:

1. the acceptance of steelpan by several influential citizens, including writers, intellectuals, lawyers, musicians, and politicians
2. governmental support, expressed in committee reports and the formation of a steelband association
3. commercial sponsorship
4. the enthusiastic reception of steelbands touring abroad
5. open support from the People's National Movement political party
6. the involvement of white, light-skinned, and better-educated middle-class persons, including more middle class women, in the bands
7. improvements in the materials and manufacture of the instrument itself
8. steelband performance of classical and semi-classical music
9. the involvement of steelbands in music festivals, churches, funerals, and middle- and upper-class social gatherings
10. a resurgence in the Black Power movement, and African ethnic pride in general, in the early 1970s (Aho 1987, 43)

This document will focus on the increased involvement of better-educated middle-class white and light-skinned persons, known at the time as “college boys,” and “white boys,” in steelbands in the late 1940s and early 1950s. While a full analysis of the relationship between the college boy steelband movement and each of the other nine factors falls beyond this project's scope, this document will

discuss two factors that highlight the crucial role played by these college boy steelbands: commercial sponsorship of bands, and support that bands received from the People's National Movement Party. Because these factors are deeply interconnected, a discussion of any one factor needs to make reference to one or more of the other of Aho's ten factors; treating any one factor as a discrete element would distort the discussion at its origin. The interconnectedness of these factors also means that any thorough examination of the evolution of the steelpan requires an overview of the demography of Trinidad and Tobago, the history of Carnival, Trinidad's largest annual holiday, and the events that led to the invention of the steelpan.

Overview of Trinidad and Tobago

Basic statistics

Trinidad is the southernmost island in the Caribbean, and sits eleven kilometers off the coast of Venezuela, across the Straits of Paria. Trinidad covers an area of 4,828 square kilometers; Tobago, which lies 30.6 kilometers to the northeast of Trinidad, covers 482.8 square kilometers. Together, they are one-and-one-half times the size of the state of Rhode Island. In 2007, Trinidad and Tobago's government estimated the country's population to be 1.3 million people. The United States Central Intelligence Agency estimate from July 2011 is 1,227,505 people.

Demographics

The population of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is racially diverse. The breakdown of ethnic self-identification from the 2000 national census is as follows: South Asian 40%, African 37.5%, mixed 20.5%, other 1.2%, unspecified 0.8 % . People who live in Trinidad and Tobago refer to themselves as Trinidadian, Trini, Tobagoan, or Trinbagoan (Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago). In addition, if the largest portion of a person's ancestry is African, he will generally refer to himself as "African." A similar practice is generally used by people of South Asian ("Indian"), and Chinese ("Chinese") ancestry. This practice will also be used throughout this document.

The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most religiously diverse countries in the Caribbean. The breakdown of religious affiliation from the 2000 census is as follows: Roman Catholic 26%, Hindu 22.5%, Anglican 7.8%, Baptist 7.2%, Pentecostal 6.8%, Muslim 5.8%, Seventh Day Adventist 4%, other Christian 5.8%, other (non-Christian) 10%, unspecified 1.4%, none 1.9% (Government of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).

Overview of Early History

On Christopher Columbus' third trip to the Americas, his boats were caught in the calm Atlantic doldrums North of the equator. They managed to sail south, and were almost out of food and water when they landed on the island of Trinidad on July 31, 1498. They landed on Point Erin and were able to get fresh

water. (Carmichael 1961). For this reason, or perhaps because Columbus was able to see the Three Sisters hills, he named the island after the Christian Trinity.

An estimated 40,000 native Amerindians lived on the island at the time of Columbus' arrival. At least eleven specific indigenous groups have been identified as living on Trinidad in 1498 (Besson, 2011). Those who spoke languages from the Arawakan language family are often identified today as Arawak (Dixon 1999. s.v. "Arawak"). Recent research suggests that Columbus and other early Spaniards met an Arawakan-speaking people who called themselves Lokono (the people). Other groups, including the Yao, spoke a language from the Carib language family¹ (Johnson, Race and History).

Spain was not interested in establishing residential settlements and plantations on Trinidad, as it did in other colonies such as Cuba. Spain did erect a fort and open up a small port on the island's western shore, and by 1553 seventy Spaniards lived on Trinidad. The Amerindian population had decreased to 6000, mainly due to disease, aggression and displacement. This reduction of the native population continued steadily over time; by 1826 only 400 Amerindians lived on Trinidad (Trinidad-Guide).

Spain allowed French settlers to establish plantations on the island in 1777, and in 1783 the Cedula of Population for Trinidad created a formal

¹ Indigenous people in the Greater Antilles were mistakenly identified by Columbus and some later Spaniards as one large aggressive tribe called the Caribs. See The Kalinago – The Island Carib *at* <http://dominicacompanies.com/features/caribpeople.html> for the origin of the word "Carib" and <http://www.raceandhistory.com/Taino/Caribs.htm> for information about Trinidad.

agreement between these two nations to share the island. By this time France had already settled in many other parts of the Caribbean, using enslaved Africans to operate plantations. It did not take long for plantation owners to set up operations on Trinidad; by 1803 the island's total population was 28,100 people (20,464 of them enslaved Africans). Britain began to occupy Trinidad in 1787 and took formal control in 1802. Although Britain ceased its participation in the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, enslavement did not end in Trinidad until August 1, 1834 (Liverpool 2003).

Trinidad's slave population was ethnically diverse. Records from Barry Higman's *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807-1834* show that almost 14,000 "native-born" Africans lived in Trinidad in 1813. The records list the countries as well as the over twenty-seven culture groups to which the Africans belonged. Most were from West Africa, but slightly more than 2,500 were from groups in Central Africa and Mozambique. Higman also lists 11,633 "Creole-born" Africans living in Trinidad in 1813. Over half of those people were born in Trinidad and the rest were born throughout the Caribbean and as far north as North America.

When the period of African enslavement ended in the 1830s, the British government did not want to restructure Trinidad's economy or its social class scheme. Many of the plantations suffered or ceased operations as a result, though immigrants from Asia and Portugal helped keep some plantations functioning (Liverpool 2003, 214). The government solved this problem by tapping a new

source of cheap imported labor: indentured workers from India. The first 225 Indians landed in Trinidad in 1845 (Johnson, Indians). This became a very successful program, and between 1845 and 1917 over 140,000 Indians were brought to Trinidad (National Library and Information System Authority, Indian Arrival).

Britain also brought indentured laborers from China. In 1806, in an experiment anticipating the end of slavery, the British brought 192 Chinese immigrant workers to Trinidad to work the plantations. However, the experiment failed when all but 23 of the immigrants opted to return to China. A second wave of Chinese immigration began in 1853, and continued until 1866. During this time eight ships brought a total of 3,937 people; most were indentured laborers, but some were voluntary migrants. More Chinese migrated to Trinidad between 1911 and 1940 because of the Chinese Revolution, and again later at the end of the 1970s (National Library and Information System Authority, China).

Columbus passed by the island of Tobago twice in 1498. He named it “Bella Forma” and mapped it, but he never set foot on the island. In 1607 Britain became the first European country to formally claim Tobago, named “Tobaco” by the Amerindians who lived there (Trinidad-Guide). Over the next 150 years, Britain, France, The Netherlands, The Duchy of Courland (a small Baltic state), and Spain would exchange colonial rule over the island. The first attempts to settle Tobago failed due to Amerindian resistance and disease. The Courlanders were the first to establish a successful settlement in the mid-1650s, and were

quickly followed by the Dutch, who soon brought enslaved Africans to the island. By 1663, approximately 1,300 colonists and 7,000 slaves lived on Tobago (Wooler).

The island did not remain under any one country's control for long; Tobago changed hands as many as thirty-three times between 1607 and 1800, sometimes peacefully and sometimes via armed conflict. Even the fledgling United States sent ships in an attempt to capture British Tobago during the American Revolution, but the British successfully resisted. Because of this long-term political instability, the slave population did not grow as fast as on Trinidad. In addition, some governments allowed slaves to earn their freedom (Wooler). Tobago eventually became a British Crown Colony in 1803 (Cahoon). When Britain abolished slavery in 1807, there were approximately 15,000 slaves on the island. Tobago joined Grenada, St. Vincent, and Barbados under the Governorship of Barbados in 1833, until it was granted a request to enter into an association with Trinidad in 1898 (Smithsonian Institute).

Carnival under British Colonial Rule

Carnival Traditions

The name of the Carnival holiday comes from *carne vale* (farewell to the flesh) before Lent. By the 1840s Carnival traditions were well established on Trinidad and Tobago. Whites still based their Carnival activities on those from the French Masquerade tradition. Africans based their events on African *obeah* spiritual beliefs, parodies of the French's masquerades, and on the *Cannes*

Brulees, reenactments of putting out fire in the cane fields on the plantations.² The African celebrations included drumming, dancing, horn playing, processions, and a special stick fighting ritual called *Kalenda*. Costumed characters behaved in humorous, scary, and sometimes lewd ways. These behaviors were unsettling to the island's British rulers; all of these activities were performed outside, and it seemed that parody performances which had originally made fun of slave masters in private were now being directed at the white ruling class.

Hosein Festival

The Indian community did not develop its own Carnival traditions for quite some time after its arrival. The Hosein, or Hosay, festival was and still is a national festival for both Hindus and Muslims. Officially recognized by Queen Victoria in 1863, it was feared by upper-class European Christians. Like the African celebrations, the Hosein festival is celebrated by large groups of people who gather outside, sing, dance and drum and pull floats in a procession. Men in this festival carry *hakka* (sticks) and *fenna* (shields) and reenact a battle (*Rajkumari*).

Ordinances

As the island's lower-class and unemployed population grew throughout the 19th century, and the colonial government became increasingly concerned about social unrest, the government passed a series of ordinances aimed at curtailing various Carnival activities. The press joined in, and waged a campaign

² For detailed information on the Cannes *Brulees*, see Liverpool, 2003.

against Carnival and any other events involving *obeah*, writing about the “annual abomination” that involved “witchcraft” and other “wild barbarous orgies” (Liverpool 2003, 301).

The Ordinance of 1868 banned the practice of *obeah* and the playing or dancing to any drum, gong, tambour, banjee, or chac-chac between the hours of ten o’clock at night and six o’clock in the morning the next day. Obscene songs and dances, the blowings of horns and the carrying of lighted torches were all banned (Liverpool 2003, 302).

It was no coincidence that these were the specific activities that were used to initiate Carnival at that time. The *Cannes Brulees* events had been nighttime events, and the 1868 laws also aimed to stop those. Laws continued to become more restrictive, leading to clashes between police and Carnival revelers. On July 10, 1883, the Amendment to Ordinance No. 6 of 1868 was passed. This law prohibited singing, dancing, drumming and other music making by “rogues and vagabonds or incorrigible rogues” and also punished owners of property that allowed it (Aho 1987, 30).

By 1884, the government was ready to permanently end *Cannes Brulees* and the other African parts of Carnival. The British were also concerned about the Hosein festival; in 1881 violence broke out and resulted in deaths. The government therefore passed the 1884 Peace Preservation Acts, consisting of two ordinances: a ban on carrying torches, beating drums, blowing horns, or assembly of ten or more people with sticks (Ordinance No. 1), and specification of a vagabond as “any person in possession of any weapon, instrument, stick, bottle, stone, or other thing intended for the purpose of committing any felony or

misdemeanour” (Ordinance No. 2) (Liverpool 2003, 315). Ordinance No. 2, in conjunction with the 1883 Amendment No. 6, would now allow police to arrest anyone carrying a *kalenda* or *hakka* stick on sight, halting any cultural or musical performance before it could begin.

General Racism

By the mid – nineteenth century racism was firmly institutionalized in Trinidad and Tobago. Africans were portrayed as lazy, immoral, and uncivilized people whose decision-making processes were governed by base physical drives rather than intellectual concerns. In an 1883 Fair Play and Trinidad News newspaper editorial about African drum dances, the editor said:

It is an acknowledged fact that the animal organs of the African are far more developed than their intellectual ones and this constitutes one of the greatest barriers against their moral and social evolution. The great majority of the black races are more contracted in their views and aspirations, low in their desires and animal in the propensities than Europeans and other civilised races (Liverpool 2003, 320).

If some of their own countrymen and women believed the Africans’ intellect was not legitimate, it is not surprising that the Africans would have to fight to prove the legitimacy of an instrument they were about to create.

Interregnum

Tamboos Bamboo

No longer allowed to drum, some Africans turned to a natural resource and invented a new instrument and ensemble, the tamboos bamboo. Tamboos bamboo

are dried hollow bamboo stalks beaten on the sides and stamped on the ground. The “tamboo” part of the name is derived from *tambour*, the French word for “drum.”

By the middle of the 1890s tamboo bamboo ensembles had three bamboo voices. The boom, or bass, is between three and five feet long and approximately five inches in diameter. It is held upright between both hands and stamped on the ground, or held with one hand and stamped on the ground, while the other hand plays a rhythm with a stick. The *foules* are a pair of bamboo sections, each approximately one foot long and two or three inches in diameter. They are struck end to end, and provide an accompanying rhythm. The lead instrument is the cutter; a very thin piece of bamboo held over the shoulder and played with a stick. At that time tamboo bamboo bands were accompanied by a bottle and spoon in addition to other instruments, such as *chac-chac* (enclosed rattles), scrapers, and iron pieces. Each of these instruments played an accompanying ostinato rhythm. A *chantuelle* (song leader) or a calypso singer and a chorus completed the ensemble (Liverpool 2003, 322).

The softer volume, the lack of religious significance, and the less-African character of tamboo bamboo made it much more acceptable to the authorities and the upper classes than drumming. Despite this, tamboo bamboo remained primarily the music of the lower classes.



Figure 1. Tamboo Bamboo Band, Tobago Carnival 2009.
center, band member playing *foule*; *far right*, band member playing a boom;
background booms, drums, and a cutter. Photo courtesy of Christopher Condor.

Although tamboo bamboo was never banned explicitly, some tamboo bamboo ensembles did run afoul of authorities. One municipal ordinance, enacted as a result of street damage from the bass tubes, allowed no more than ten bass beaters at a time. At times the tamboo bamboo bands clashed with each other or with police; the instruments, used as weapons, would end up being confiscated by police (Liverpool 2003, 363).

It is important to note that the lead rhythm instrument in the tamboo bamboo band took its name, “cutter,” from the lead instrument in the Indian *tassa*

drum ensembles. Modern steelbands have an instrument named cutter also; within the section of metal timekeepers called the irons, the special lead accent iron is named the cutter. *Tassa* music has influenced steelband music in many other ways as well. Steelband composer and arranger Pelham Goddard's first musical experience as a young boy was in a *tassa* band (Phillips 2010). Len "Boogsie" Sharpe 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" (Sharpe 2005). Certain rhythmic breaks and tags appear in steelband arrangements that are similar to *tassa* rhythms. Steelbands included actual *tassa* drums on stage at times, in various chutney-soca tunes (pop music with Indian elements) or cross-cultural compositions, and also at Panorama.

String Bands

Many middle and upper class people (whether white, Creole, or African) turned to "string bands" as their favored Carnival ensemble in the 1890s. String instruments from South America, including the guitar, cuatro and mandolin were combined with the European flute and violin, and the West African banjo. Programs from string band performances of that time also included percussion instruments such as scrapers, chac-chac and goat skin drums (Liverpool 2003, 329). Curiously, these percussion instruments and the banjo were all instruments that had been banned by the 1884 Peace Preservation Act, yet they were allowed in ensembles that performed for upper class people, and string bands became the ensembles of choice for Calypsonians in concerts and parades.

Because the string band was an ensemble with instruments from three continents, and whose music was enjoyed by people of various races and classes in a variety of venues, it was a significant medium for the acculturation of Carnival in the 1890s. Another musical evolution took place that same decade; *chantuelles* and calypsonians made their final switch from French patois to English. Because the upper classes were able to understand song lyrics, calypso audiences increased, helping Trinidad move toward a national embrace of Carnival.

Introduction of Metal

There are competing stories about who first added metal instruments to their tamboo bamboo band. In a 1983 interview, calypsonian Raphael “Roaring Lion” DeLeon spoke of a tamboo bamboo band led by David Leach from George Street in Port of Spain that played metal in 1930. He said they "would pick up garbage pan covers, pieces of steel from the smith shop in George Street, and any cooking utensil they could find and proceed to beat it in time with the rhythm of the tamboo bamboo" (Aho 1987, 31). Other sources say that all tamboo bamboo bands added pieces of metal gradually during the 1930s. This is not surprising, because most tamboo bamboo bands included the bottle and spoon, and sometimes one or two metal timekeepers. As bamboo broke and bands wanted to increase their volume, the advantages of found metal became obvious.

Regardless of which tamboo bamboo band was the first to incorporate metal instruments, it is generally agreed that “1935 is the watershed year” for the

complete conversion from bamboo to metal instruments, beginning with The Cavalry Tamboo Bamboo Band (Raradath 2000). By 1936 they had renamed themselves Alexander's Ragtime Band and were the first band to appear at *J'Ouvert* (day-break of Carnival Monday) with all metal instruments (Batson 1995).

The Ping Pong

There are also competing stories about who was the first person to get fixed pitches on a pan. Steelband historian Norman Darway believes that the most credible story is that of Victor "Toti" Wilson from the Cavalry Tamboo Bamboo Band. In 1938 Victor picked up a paint-mixing pan on the side of the road during a parade. He took it back to the yard and the band incorporated it into their sound. Victor continued to work on manipulating the pan until he was able to isolate four notes in 1939. He tuned his notes to the chimes of the Queen's Royal College clock, which was said to go "ping pong ping pong" every hour. When he finished his pan he said, "Look ah have meh Ping Pong" (Darway 2005). George Goddard interviewed Toti Wilson, who said that it was his cousin, Frederick "Mondo" Wilson, who actually first picked up the paint can, in 1935 or 1936. Casablanca's leader Oscar Pile told a similar story about Alexander's Ragtime Band in an interview with Dr. William Aho. Oscar Pile, however, says that a man named Carlton "Lord Humbugger" Forde was the first to pick up a paint can as an instrument (Aho 1987).

Pan

The Steelpan Development Timeline³

In 1931 a typical bamboo band's instrumentation consisted of cutters, foule (also called buller), and boom (bass) tubes, bottles played with spoons, and perhaps a scraper or chac-chac. In 1935 the bamboo band Gonzales began to use an empty metal container for a bass sound, in conjunction with booms. Other bands incorporated more and more pieces of metal, and by 1936 Alexander Ford established Alexander's Ragtime Band, the first all-metal band to perform at *J'Ouvert*. They used pans for storing "sweet oil" (cooking oil) and metal dustbins. Each pan's top was pounded into a convex shape, and beat with wooden sticks.

By 1939, tuners discovered how to manipulate the tension of the metal to attain fixed pitches. Victor "Toti" Wilson was probably one of the first men to successfully create three-note and four-note melody pans. These pans had convex-shaped tops until Ellie Mannette created the first concave-surfaced pan sometime in 1940 or 1941.

The standard instrumentation of a 1941 steelband consisted of the tenor kittle, which was a three-note melody pan made from a zinc or paint can (the name kittle comes from military kettle drum); a cuff boom (also called a slap bass), which was a biscuit drum struck with a cloth-wrapped hand or a stick with

³ Reference sources for this section are listed in the summary table found in Appendix A.

rubber; a dudup (or bass kettle), a two-pitch instrument made from a lightweight (approximately 25 gallon) caustic soda drum; an iron; a chac-chac or scratcher; and sometimes voices or a horn.



Figure 2. An early postcard shows a pre-colonial steelband, including two dud-dup players and a kittle player in the foreground. An iron is held up in the background, center. Photo courtesy of Kim Johnson.

At some point between 1941 and 1944, Eddie Meyers of the Oval Boys put a pan over a fire to try to burn off some rust or dirt. He discovered that the fire tempered the steel and greatly improved the tone. Other tuners soon adopted the practice.

Players first began to wrap their sticks with rubber in 1943. Ellie Mannette claims he was the first to conceive of and play with wrapped sticks. Neville Jules says his friend Prince Batson thought up the idea, suggested it to Jules, and Jules

was the first person to do it. There are also reports that a band near San Fernando was using wrapped sticks around the same time.

By 1945 the standard steelband included five- to seven-note ping pongs made from 35- gallon sweet oil drums, five-note tenor kittles, cuff booms, dudups, an iron, and a chac–chac or scratcher.

Between 1945 and 1950 several middle voices were developed that were the prototypes to modern steelpan voices. The tune boom, a four-note bass pan made from a biscuit tin, was invented in 1946, either by Neville Jules or Sonny Roach. Neville Jules created the grundig, which was a forerunner of the cello pan and named after a German record company. Jules also created the cuatro, a forerunner of the guitar pan and named after the Venezuelan stringed instrument that inspired its creation. Philmore “Booths” Davidson created a pan he named the guitar pan right around the same time. (Jules said Booths did so after hearing his cuatro pans.) Other mid-range instruments from this time include the chu-fat, the grumbler, and the balay (or bélé), a four-note caustic soda drum.

In 1945 or 1946 Anthony Williams experimented with building a pan from a 55-gallon drum. The people who saw his pan said it was too heavy, so he abandoned the idea. Weight was an important consideration, because at this time pans were strung around player’s necks for parades, or players sat down, held the top of the pan with one hand, rested the bottom edge on their laps, and played with one hand.

By 1946, tuners were able to fit an eight-note diatonic scale into ping pongs. Because tuning an entire major scale had been a major goal from the beginning, there are numerous stories of who accomplished this first; the prevailing consensus is that Winston "Spree" Simon was one of the first to do this well. Adding another octave was also highly desirable, and Ellie Mannette is credited for reaching fifteen diatonic notes by 1947.

Andrew Beddoe and Randolph "Phil" Wiltshire are credited with making the first viable pan built from a 55-gallon drum. (Wiltshire says Beddoe did not tune it.) Cyril "Snatcher" Guy, from the steelband Boom Town in Tacarigua, played the pan in a competition in a cinema in Tunapuna in 1947. Etching (also called grooving) the note outlines on the pans began at that time, by either Andrew Beddoe or Ellie Mannette. Mannette and others used 44-gallon and 45-gallon drums for the rest of the decade.

In 1947, Anthony Williams wanted to play the jazz standard, "Stardust" and realized he needed more pitches. He became the first tuner to add chromatic pitches to a pan. Sonny Roach (of Sun Valley) or Selwyn Gomes (of the Tropitones) developed the single second pan in late 1947 or early 1948. In 1949 Ellie Mannette fit twenty-three notes into a ping pong; that same year, Neville Jules sank a caustic soda drum top approximately three inches deep to create a bass. Anthony Williams says he is first to use caustic soda drums for bass pans, although his account is disputed. Also that year, players in the Southern Symphony used three sticks each to play chords.

In 1950 the Steelband Association formed and involved itself in formal Trinidadian musical activities. This spurred development and innovation in areas such as tuning and timbre manipulation, especially when the bands began to perform and compete at the Trinidad Music Festival in 1952.

The Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO) was formed in 1951. Their director, Lieutenant Nathaniel Griffith, asked his tuners Anthony Williams and Neville Jules to make all of their voices chromatic. All of their pans were made from 55-gallon drums. Anthony Williams made double cellos, which allowed him to get ten notes and a better tone. (Ellie Mannette includes himself in the creation of the double cello, but most other accounts do not.) Neville Jules made a set of triple bass pans called the “Chaguaramas Bass.” TASPO was thus chromatic from ping pong to bass, and amazed the British with their orchestral arrangements when they toured later that year.

Anthony Williams began to lead the North Stars in 1952; his innovations during the following years included playing strummed rhythms on double seconds, wooden double second stands, metal ping pong stands, and putting legs on double cellos.

Katzenjammers tuner and captain Percy “Lizard” Thomas made the first double second pans for Dixieland in 1952. When Ellie Mannette returned from touring with TASPO he worked on double seconds as well, and worked on sets of

bass that had three, four, and five notes in each barrel. Also in 1952, Patrick Thomas developed a swivel-wheel for the bottom of pan stands that allowed them to be pushed easily.

By the late 1940s pan tuners had learned that the physical placement of pitches inside a pan would greatly affect its sound. In a 1998 interview with Chris Tanner, Ellie Mannette described

While we were developing the pans, we had trouble in separating tones; meaning, we had trouble separating the overtones from the fundamental note. Keeping related tones or close tones from ringing into each other. One thing we did was scatter the notes, almost jig-saw puzzle-like, to see if we would be able to better tune the notes. It was deliberate, keeping the notes away from each in a criss-cross pattern (Nurse 2007: 361).

Mannette's hard work resulted in the whole-tone note pattern that he designed for the double seconds, in late 1952 or 1953. It is still used by many tuners today around the world.

Anthony Williams created the "spider-web" note pattern in 1953. Also called the "4ths-and-5ths" pattern, the spider-web pattern was a revolutionary note arrangement for what was by then called the tenor pan. This pattern uses physical measurements and harmonic properties to place and create pitches; Williams had identified the first overtone partial and believed octaves and fifths should be placed next to each other. The 4ths-and-5ths pattern is the most widely used pitch pattern for tenor pans today.⁴

⁴ Ellie Mannette's tenor pan pitch pattern is known as "Invader-style." It is still in common use today, more so in the Caribbean than in the United States.

Bertie Marshall went further in 1956 by tuning the harmonics of each note, and purposefully including overtones in his pans. Ellie Mannette has stated that Percy Serrano from Katzenjammers made the first drum with audible harmonics in 1952, but supporting data has not been found. Bertie Marshall perfected and shared his techniques. His work is heard in every steelpan made today.

The Carnival experience changed for all steelpannists and their followers in 1956 when Anthony Williams put wheels on bass pans. Sets of three and five basses went out on the road, allowing the steelbands to play complete bass lines in their road tunes. Next, bands began to devise racks so that voices with multiple pans could be mounted together. Although the TASPO pans had all been made out of 55-gallon drums, steelbands still used the lighter caustic soda drums on the road. Pans made from 55-gallon drums sound superior to those made from caustic soda drums but are too heavy to be easily portable. Mounting wheels on 55-gallon drums solved this problem so effectively that caustic soda drums fell almost entirely out of use. In 1960 Williams's North Stars would become the first band to go out on the road entirely with wheel-mounted pans.

Ellie Mannette expanded the double cello into a triple-pan instrument, and the triple cello pattern he settled on in 1958 is one many pan tuners use today. He used his former double cellos as guitar pans, and eventually began placing those notes in a whole-tone pattern as well. Other tuners adopted this pattern, and the

whole –tone pattern is very common in modern guitar pans. In 1959 Mannette isolated the high range of the bass pans and called it the tenor bass.

A standard steelband of the early 1960s would have the following instrumentation: tenors, double seconds, guitar, cellos, bass, iron, scratcher, and other percussion appropriate for the event (e.g. classical percussion instruments such as timpani would be brought in for the Music Festival). All pans were on stands with wheels or could fit onto wheeled racks.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Bertie Marshall stretched the belly of the 4ths-and-5ths tenor from four to six and a half inches deep. This allowed tuners to add more pitches and improved the tone. He also stretched double seconds deeper, improving their tone. Marshall wanted to create a voice that would fit in between the tenor and the double seconds. He experimented with pitches and skirt lengths, eventually fitting in thirty-one notes. He named this new voice the double tenor.

In 1962 Bertie Marshall began to lead the Highlanders. Important innovations he made during that time included putting sets of six bass on the road, attaching canopies over the pan racks to protect the pans and improve their sound, and the popularization of harmonic tuning in tenor and double tenor pans. Marshall's Highlanders also made notable contributions with their repertoire and arrangements, and was the first steelband to perform with full choir and organ in Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port of Spain in 1965.

Rudolph Charles began to lead the Desperadoes in 1964. His innovations include: chrome-plating pans for protection, making sets of nine-bass, improving

triple cellos, creating rocket bass pans (which were supported sideways), and using aluminum canopies over pan racks.

In 1965 Bertie Marshall put contact microphones inside pans in order to explore timbre and the possibility of sustain control. (It was not the first time electric amplification had been used: In the 1957 carnival Tripoli went on the road with an amplified tenor. They used a car battery to power the amp and a friend named Totee held the mic the whole way) (Alexis 2011). Unfortunately, the pan community rejected Marshall's idea. It is the case even today that the traditional dynamic or condenser microphone is the only widely accepted means for amplifying steelpan. This failure to embrace electrification has cost steelpan performers (as well as the wider steelpan community) money, prominence, and prestige. The cultural dominance of the electric guitar over its acoustic cousin is an illustrative parallel case.⁵

Tony Williams continued experiments of his own, and in 1968 used twenty-six inch and twenty-nine inch tenor pans, allowing thirty-six notes to get clearer tones. In 1970, Bertie Marshall became resident tuner for Desperadoes. Together with Rudolph Charles, he invented the quadraphonic pans, twelve-bass pans, and "the Marshall tone" (a six-pan extended-range instrument for one player). Marshall also began to use a strobe tuner with the Desperadoes, enabling

⁵ Salmon Cupid invented the E-Pan, a midi-pan in 2008, and its popularity and use are growing.

him to tune the entire band to a superior level of accuracy. This practice is widely followed today.

The most recent pan voice created was the quaduet. Introduced by Ellie Mannette in 1996, it is a four-pan solo instrument with an extended range.⁶

Performance Contexts

Carnival

Steelbands parade through the streets of their neighborhoods, and sometimes the entire city, on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Parading in the streets is called “going on the road,” and the bands play “road tunes,” which are popular songs that they have learned for the occasion. Players originally hung their pans on straps around their necks; today, steelbands mount their pans on long trailer beds that are pulled by a truck or a tractor.

Some steelbands host or join a formal Carnival mas’ (masquerade) band with a specific theme, and the band’s supporters can buy matching costumes. Other steelbands play without participating in a mas’ theme, and their supporters dance or “jump up” alongside the band in casual clothes, sometimes wearing one of the steelband’s t-shirts.

The holiday formally begins with *J’Ouvert*, a special celebration that begins around 4:00am. Steelbands often begin playing at a slow tempo until their sleepy crowd wakes up enough to dance. The *J’Ouvert* route in Port of Spain can

⁶ Pictures of many of the instruments and people mentioned in this section are in Kim Johnson, 2010. *The Illustrated Story of Pan*. University of Trinidad and Tobago Press

take five hours or longer to play through the city. *J'Ouvert* is when steelbands can choose to compete to play the best “bomb tune,” i.e., a calypso arrangement of classical music for the road. This competition began in the late 1950s when the Invaders and the All-Stars competed for crowd approval on *J'Ouvert* morning. To evade the Invader’s scouts, Neville Jules had the All-Stars practice one piece in secret, so that they could surprise the *J'Ouvert* crowd. Other bands joined in over time. The name “bomb” comes from an All Stars member who told someone, “Wait until *J'Ouvert* morning when we drop the bomb.” (Dudley 2008, 115)

Modern bomb competitions are formally organized by host organizations which set up a reviewing stand along the parade route and publish formal scores.

Parade routes can take twice as long when more people play mas’ for regular Carnival, which begins midday on Monday. Steelbands will continue to play their road tunes and also their bomb tune for the rest of Monday and Tuesday.

Steelband Music Festival

Steelbands were first included into the biannual National Music Festival in 1952 after successful lobbying by the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandmen (NATTS). Disagreements between the NATTS and Trinidadian Music Association led to steelbands withdrawing from the Festival in 1962. The NATTS held its first Steelband Music Festival competition at the Queen’s Hall in June 1964. This festival has continued annually or bi-annually in some form to this day (Batson 1995, 44). In 1980 the Festival was re-named “Pan

is Beautiful,” and added “World Steelband Festival” to its name in 1988. Bands from Europe, the United States and other parts of the Caribbean began to compete, sometimes conducting their own regional finals before joining Trini bands for a final contest round. The logistics and finances of this format have proven difficult to maintain, thus future Steelband Festivals may be limited to Trinidad and Tobago bands only.

Panorama

NATTS began making arrangements to start its own Music Festival in 1962. The executive committee also decided to look into establishing its own event for Carnival at that time. The committee went to speak to the Chamber of Commerce, which was in charge of running a Carnival Saturday night program that presented Ms. Trinidad and Tobago. The Chamber of Commerce also hired small steel bands. The NATTS and the Chamber of Commerce made an agreement that gave Carnival Saturday night to the steelbands for a competition. Desmond Chase and Lloyd Polonaise proposed the name for the competition, Panorama, to the committee.

Trinidad and Tobago’s first annual Panorama was held at the Queen’s Park Savannah, February 22, 1963. North Stars won this first Panorama competition with Mighty Sparrow’s tune *Dan is The Man*, arranged by Anthony Williams. Twenty-two other bands participated. Panorama has since evolved into an important part of the Carnival holiday that draws steelpannists and pan enthusiasts from all over the world.

Two different types of steelbands compete in Panorama: single pan bands and conventional steel orchestras. Single pan bands are contemporary versions of the early “pan ’round de neck” bands in which each voice only has one barrel, but the pans are placed on stands for the modern competition. Conventional steel orchestras are fully chromatic ensembles of at least five to eight modern steelpan voices. In 2004 the competition expanded to include three different conventional size categories: small (maximum 60 players), medium (maximum 90 players), and large (maximum 120 players).

Today, so many bands participate in Panorama that a preliminary round takes place in four geographical zones around the country: then semi- final and final rounds are held in the Queen’s Park Savannah. The entire competition takes a month or more that culminates on finals night held on Carnival Saturday. A total of 153 steelbands competed in the 2011 Panorama competition: sixty-five single pan bands and eighty-eight conventional bands (When Steel Talks).

Pan Down Memory Lane and Pan in the 21st Century

Two other annual competitions began in 1998. Pan Down Memory Lane is a competition for single pan bands of up to thirty-five musicians. Each band plays a non-calypso contemporary tune arranged in a calypso tempo for a maximum of six minutes. A similar competition, Pan in the 21st Century, is for conventional steel orchestras of thirty to fifty musicians. Each band plays a non-calypso tune,

preferably a popular hit from the 21st century, arranged in a calypso tempo for a maximum of six minutes (Wack Radio).⁷

Early Grassroots Steelbands

As recently as the 1940s, the pan community consisted mainly of economically lower-class Trinidadians of African extraction. The generally accepted term for this class is the grass-roots class. As Stephen Steumpfle explains in *Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National art in Trinidad and Tobago*:

“Working class” is inappropriate because of high rates of unemployment and self-employment in Trinidad. “Grass roots class” also does not have the negative connotations of “lower class.” A further justification for the term is that grass-roots people perceive themselves as a distinct group in the society and are perceived as such by the middle and upper classes. (Steumpfle 1995, 241)

Those grass-roots people who did have jobs generally worked at skilled or unskilled labor, farmed, or were street vendors.

Many steelbandmen could not find work. This was especially true during the post-World War II recession, created in large part by the loss of jobs that resulted from the departure of the American sailors who had been based on the islands during the war. Steelbandmen were considered the basest members of society, and troublemakers. Newspaper articles from that era refer to the steelbandmen as “hooligans” and “vagabonds” (Steumpfle 1995, 89).

⁷ Musical notation was not used in these competitions until the late 1990s, and only a small number of bands choose to use notation now. Most arrangers still teach their music entirely by rote.

The steelbands themselves fueled this image by fighting with each other, which they sometimes referred to as “rioting.” Violence between steelbands during the 1940s and 1950s has been attributed in part to poor living conditions in lower-class neighborhoods. Inadequate housing, overcrowding, and the lack of recreational outlets limited opportunities to safely release tensions. Sometimes steelbands fought to protect their territory, instruments and music.

It is thought that other fights may have been started by accident, with a carelessly tossed bottle, for example. Many people draw a distinction between the true serious steelbandmen and the troublemakers who hung around the panyards. Pan tuner Tony Slater says, “Most of the people used to get involved in the riot really, was the supporters. It wasn’t much of the people who play the pan used to get into anything, you know? Because music is something like that; you can’t apply violence into it” (Hoffman, 2011).⁸

Discord between steelbands and the police was a different matter, however. Many things that steelbands did in the course of music-making were seen as openly defiant and/or illegal.

It is generally accepted that the police-steelbands conflict was related to the noise the bands made, parading on the streets without a permit, stealing dustbins and other items to use as instruments, and the steel drum’s lack of acceptance by the government, ruling classes, and police as a legitimate musical instrument. Some also believe the police simply harassed people living in the poorer districts (Aho 1987, 37).

⁸ Throughout this document, transcriptions of quotes phonetically represent dialect.

The nineteenth-century racist view of Africans—ruled by their bodies rather than their intellect—was applied to steelbandmen, and their music was blamed for all manner of evils. One letter to the editor of the *Trinidad Guardian* advocated the banning of steelbands completely, saying that steelbandmen “are not ‘students of our culture,’ as some argue, but rum maddened, hypnotized, and inflamed by the savage primitive beat of the steel pans, are turned into beasts. Even decent people have been heard to say that this savage beat ‘does something’ to them” (Steumpfle 1995, 91).

There were so many negative associations made about panmen and pan culture in the 1940s that merely being seen in a panyard could ruin a woman’s reputation. Calypsonian Mighty Sparrow sang about this in “The Outcast:”

For a long time
To associate yourself wid dem was a big crime
If your sister talk to a steelband man
Your family want to break she hand.
Put she out,
Lick out every teeth in she mouth
Pass!
You a Outcast! (Warner 1982: 86)

By the early 1950s, grassroots steelbands had established themselves in several neighborhoods: Hill 60, Desperadoes, John-John, Tokyo, Facinators and City Symphony all hailed from Laventille; downtown Port of Spain was home to Sputniks, Starland, All-Stars and Renegades; Dry River was home to City Syncopaters and Casablanca; Belmont bands included Sunland, Rising Son, Dem

Boys; St. James bands included Crossfire, North Stars, Tripoli, and Sun Valley, Crossroad; and Woodbrook was home to Invaders and Saigon, and Metronome.

Seventy-six bands joined the Steelband Association when it formed in 1950. Twenty-six bands joined the Southern Association, which began in 1951. In 1962 the Steelband Association became the National Association of Trinidad and Tobago Steelbandmen.

College Boy Steelbands

In the 1940s middle class youth became increasingly interested in steelband music, and in playing the steelpan themselves. By the end of the decade some of them had formed their own small bands.

According to Steumpfle, the “middle class” in Trinidad at this time “includes professionals, white-collar workers, small and moderate-sized business persons and moderate-sized landowners (Highly skilled and successful manual workers can also be considered middle class)” (Steumpfle 1995, 241). Some middle class youths attended elite secondary schools such as Fatima College, Queen’s Royal College, and St. Mary’s College, and thus were called “college boys.” This gave them a very different formative experience than the poorer youth who couldn’t afford to attend school past age 12, as free secondary education was not introduced in Trinidad until 1960 (Campbell 1997).

Also significant to the future of the steelpan, these college boys differed from grass-roots panmen not only in class background and educational level but in ethnicity and skin color. Many were brown skinned and some were fair skinned or white. By the late 1950s and 1960s increasing numbers of Chinese and Indian youths became involved in pan as well (Steumpfle 1995, 100).

Despite their diversity in skin color, because very few of them were African, grassroots players often referred to the middle-class bands as “white-boy bands,” or “white college boy bands.”

College Boy Motivation

The vibrant, unrestrained expression of pan fit the college boys’ teenage sensibilities. They also liked the fact that steelbands played the popular songs of the day. Some simply fell in love with the sound of the pan. Scholar Stephen Steumpfle holds that “the world of the street held lure” for some middle class youth; they were attracted by the overall steelband culture, including the dangerous element. By forming their own bands college boys avoided having to participate in the hostile environment of the time.

Dixieland

In 1950 a group of boys started a band in Ernest Ferriera’s backyard in Corbeau town. They called themselves the Melody Makers, but changed their name to Dixieland, and became the first well known college band. When Curtis Pierre, one of Dixieland’s leaders, was interviewed in 1989, he said that the band started out as a disorganized group of tenor players. They did not make much progress until a couple of boys went to the Red Army panyard nearby, and sought

help from Alfred “Sack” Meyers and the Red Army captain, Morris. Red Army (who later became Merry Makers) lent the boys some additional pans and Sack taught them technique. Until that point, Pierre said, he had not known there were voices other than the tenor. Curtis, a student at St. Mary’s College, had not spent any time around steelbands prior to his involvement with Dixieland. His family strongly objected to steelbandmen; when a friend lent Pierre a pan in 1949 he took it home to show his mother. She yelled at him and said, “I don’t want you mixing with the rabs [her name for the pan men] - that is not for you!” (Steumpfle 1995, 102). The relationship between Red Army and Dixieland continued for years. Dixieland used Red Army pan tuners and Sack Meyers performed with them at fetes and other engagements.

Dixieland had white, Portuguese, and African players, but it was sometimes called a “Chinese band,” because some of its members were of Chinese descent. When Dixieland went out on the road for mas’ the Chinese community followed them. “Our supporters were ninety percent Chinese,” said Ernest Ferreira (Johnson 2008, 49). Steelpanists of Chinese descent made important early contributions in at least three bands founded in the 1950s.

Girl Pat

Most college bands practiced in a member’s back yard, except for the all-female steelband Girl Pat Steelband. Founded by Hazel Henley and Pat Maurice, both piano-trained, the Girl Pat Steelband practiced in Hazel’s living room because it would be unseemly for them to play in a panyard (Kim Johnson 2008,

80). Hazel, Pat, Ellie Robertson, Sammy Espinet, and Irma Waldron-Regis played tenor, Sylvia Dedier Gowin, Jean Ewing and Joyce Ford played seconds, Irma Cyrus-Nelson played tune boom, and Grace Ford and Joan Rolston played bass (Albino-de Coteau 2005).

Other Bands

The most well-known and successful college boy band is Silver Stars, which will be detailed later in this document. Other well-known college bands include Troubadors, Dixie Stars, Moscow, Nightingales, Stromboli, and Tropitones. Some of these bands were also known as family bands because they were formed and run by siblings or cousins.

Hell's Kitchen and Tripoli

Hell's Kitchen and Tripoli are two bands from St. James that are sometimes mistakenly placed in the college boy category. Both bands helped advance the status of pan in the public eye (and thus warrant discussion here), but neither group's lineage can be traced back to the socioeconomic origins of true college boy bands. Hell's Kitchen was a children's band started by Hugh Borde, his brothers and neighborhood kids around 1941. Hell's Kitchen was the first steelband to get corporate sponsorship, by Robinson Crusoe Rum Company in 1945. The rum company draped its banners around a truck and had the band play in the back. Hell's Kitchen ended when its members moved on to bigger steelbands. Hugh Borde eventually settled at Tripoli, a St. James band founded by Joseph Crick. In 1951 Borde took over leadership of Tripoli, and although the

band rioted with others, it was successful. In 1967 Borde moved the band to North America. Tripoli performed at the 1967 Montreal World Exposition and toured with Liberace, with whom they performed on all the major television shows and in all of the major concert halls in North America (Nurse 2007, 51). Today Tripoli exists primarily as a family band in the United States, where Hugh Borde still lives.



Figure 3. An early photo of the Hit Paraders. Tommy Fernandez identifies players.

Hit Paraders

Three brothers founded the Hit Paraders. Gerald, Tommy, and David “Sonny” Fernandez are primarily of Portuguese descent, and grew up in a house at 14 Ana Street in Woodbrook, Port of Spain where Gerald still lives today. The band began in late 1949 when the oldest brother, Sonny, found a pan near the road and brought it home. Gerald was 14 years old and Tommy was around 16.

The original motivation for the Fernandez brothers to play pan was opportunity and amusement. As Gerald explains, ‘We play football, we play cyclin’ running, it’s just something else.’ But after they realized they had talent and could truly make good music together, it became something more than a way to pass the time.

Family Attitudes

Unlike some other college bands, the Hit Paraders had the knowledge and consent of their parents. The backyard at Ana Street became the Hit Parader panyard, complete with afternoon and evening rehearsals. The bass player, Banfield, worked for the Port of Spain newspaper, *The Trinidad Guardian*. Whenever Banfield had to work the second shift and miss part of their practice, Mrs. Fernandez would play his part instead, says Gerald:

Practice in the night and Banfield not here as yet; my mother’s beating the bass! She used beat the bass for us, she used to beat the bass! I jes’ used to tell her when to change and what note – and then she get - it jes’ come so and she - ya didn’t have to tell her anything and when until Ban [came].

He worked for the Guardian, and sometime he had to work shift so we had to wait until he had to come here, and then we rehearse for about a hour or so then he go home. But during that time, she play instead. *She beat the bass.*

Mrs. Fernandez's participation was remarkable because it was extremely rare for women to play pan in the 1950s, and those that did were younger, such as the teenage members of the Girl Pat Steelband. Mr. Fernandez was happy his sons had found an activity to keep them busy. Here is Gerald's story of how Mr. Fernandez defended his sons one evening to a policeman who came to the yard in response to a noise complaint:

We were in the yard here, my mother and father sittin' down with us. We be beating quiet very very quiet jus' here. And all of a sudden a fella come on a bicycle. He get a complaint makin' noise. Now this is nine o'clock you had laws in those days; But nine o'clock you couldna' make any kinda noise.

So he came and the complaint he didn't say who but we knew. He said that "Yuh makin' noise in people head an this and that." Daddy say, "Look at: my two sons here with a friend, beatin' the pans, What you want them to do? Go outside lookin' for trouble? Then stay right in the yard where they could be safe an' everyting?"

Community Attitudes

It was easy to figure out who lodged a complaint to that policeman because the Hit Paraders enjoyed extremely strong support from the neighborhood. Tommy says it is because they were "family oriented," and Gerald believes the organization matters as well, calling it "family-organized business:"

These small bands, with the 'white boys' as you would have to say in those days, were more organized, *sure* as a family-organized business, right? It was more organized. There was no steelband riot, no fight among them. And that was the main thing in those days when steelband first started.

One example of this family organization is a rule set down by Mr. Fernandez. When the band had grown and attracted quite a few outside players, he told them not to show up until after 3:00pm, “because you supposed to be in school.” A weekday morning glance into the panyard betrayed the difference between a grassroots band and the Hit Paraders; the Hit Paraders’ yard would be empty (all of its members were in school), while there were nearly always young men in a grassroots band’s yard; young men who many middle- and upper-class Trinis thought were simply loitering.

At Carnival time, neighbors would eagerly ask the Hit Paraders when they were going out to play, as that was the only band they would feel safe to jump up with. A church sits on the other side of the alley and about a half block West from the Fernandez property. The neighborhood was so accommodating of the Hit Paraders’ playing that the only time the church asked them to refrain from practicing was on Carnival Sunday, because their iron was so loud it interrupted the church service.

Gary Griffith is the only neighborhood band member whom the Fernandez brothers can recall who could not get parental permission to play. Gary lived a few houses down on Ana Street. Gary’s parents considered beating pan to be a low activity. Their opinion was not swayed by the fact that their neighbors supported the band. In order to come to rehearsals Gary would sneak into the yard through the back alley door.

Tuning

Hit Paraders did not begin in a manner similar to other middle class steelbands. Dixieland began with instruments obtained from the grass-roots band Red Army, but the Hit Paraders “started from scratch,” as Gerald likes to say. The first pan was a tenor pan with 13 notes. For additional pans, the brothers enlisted the help of Michael “Nazi” Contante, who lived on the other side of the sewer alley. Nazi tuned pans, and practiced his craft on the Hit Parader pans. The Fernandez boys prepared pans for him, cutting, sinking, grooving, and burning whatever voices Nazi needed.

The first containers they built pans from were biscuit tins, but those were soon replaced by caustic soda drums for bass pans and 55-gallon drums for other voices. Some bands at that time struggled to find decent barrels, often resorting to stealing them from each other, businesses or the American military base, but the Hit Paraders had a connection. Their bass player, Banfield, had a friend who worked at an Esso Station in Port of Spain. The friend sold them empty steel drums for 75 cents each. They also bought some from Alston’s Shipping. After making each purchase, the boys would wait until nighttime to bring the pans home. In the early 1950s, there were so few cars on the road after dark that the boys were able to roll the pans directly up Wrightson Road to Ana Street where they live.

The Hit Paraders’ pans were tuned in the key of C. The general pitch range of the band was medium to low, with the tenor pans containing 14 notes. Tommy

Fernandez describes the tenor and double second pans as “pretty flat” with a shallow bowl and “wide notes” The second pans had about nine or ten notes.

The first time the boys heard a guitar pan was when they were on their way to play a party one night. As they walked by a cinema they heard a steelband playing inside. Soaring out of the theatre was a beautiful singing sound, in a medium low voice. At the time they had a five-note pan made from a biscuit tin. After that night, however, the biscuit tin was discarded and the Hit Paraders played a guitar that Nazi built from a fifty-five gallon drum. Sometime after that Nazi built his first set of double guitar pans, having reasoned that if he could put five notes on one pan, he can get nine notes on two. The Fernandez boys didn't know other tuners were working on double guitars, and were amazed at Nazi's creation. Tommy and Gerald do not have a record of the month or year Nazi completed his first set, but it was probably within a year of Anthony William's first set of double cello pans for TASPO.

The story of Nazi developing his double guitars is a prime example of the development and evolution that was happening in panyards all over the country in the 1950s. It helps to explain how conflicting stories exist about who was the first tuner to make each voice and each development in the steelband. Tommy points out that they have a scrapbook of newspaper clippings about the Hit Paraders, Starlift, the Music Festivals and Silver Stars. Without the clippings, he wouldn't be able to remember the dates, he says.

The Hit Paraders always called that voice a “guitar” because that pan played the chords in a strum rhythm. Because that pan’s basic role remained the same in all Hit Parader arrangements, they never re-named it a cello. The Hit Parader’s caustic soda drum bass had four pitches.

An empty steel barrel was relatively expensive, so Nazi and the Hit Paraders had to make a pan out of each end of an empty barrel. This was not ideal, because while one end of each barrel was flat and easy to work with, the other end had a knot or spout that made pan manufacture and tuning difficult. Nazi’s solution was to make tenors and seconds from the more-desirable flat side, and lower-pitched guitar pans from the other side. “You see, because in those days the drum was difficult to get,” explains Gerald. “Seventy-five cents in those days was plenty money to pay for a drum. You had to utilize every ting. Nothing to discard.”

Nazi became very well known for his tuning, and the Hit Paraders became known for their good sound. Tommy remembers a young man who came to join them and brought a tenor pan with him. When the young man heard the Hit Parader pans he realized his pan was inferior. Some of the Silver Stars players brought pans tuned by the people from Invaders and discovered that they “were not up to mark,” Tommy’s phrase for low-quality. At times Nazi was so busy the Hit Paraders had to get other tuners to tune their pans, such as Ellie Mannette from the Invaders.



Figure 4. “Invader Alley.” Gerald Fernandez stands in his banana grove behind his home in Woodbrook. The Fernandez home is behind the wall on the right, and the Hit Paraders’ tuner, “Nazi” Contante, lived behind the wall on the left. This was originally part of a sewer alley used by the Invaders steelband to avoid the police.

It was also important to tune the iron, to complement the pans and the keys their tunes were in. Over time the Hit Paraders acquired different pieces of iron so that they had more than one piece from which to choose. An ideal iron sound is a “nice, heavy sound.” Relative pitch could be adjusted the same way pans were tuned; the metal was pounded and pushed or pulled, “just like you’re tightening a note on a pan,” says Gerald.

Musical Training

None of the Fernandez brothers had formal musical training. When the Hit Paraders formed, Mr. Fernandez suggested Gerald take piano lessons, and an aunt tried to teach him to read music. Gerald resisted both ideas, something he calls a “mistake” today. He and Tommy are both mindful now that knowing how to read music would have made some things easier. They point to their cousin, Roy Roll, who knew how to read and write music, and could learn pieces very quickly. In fact, Roy helped Ray Holman, who later became an internationally recognized arranger and composer. when Ray was starting to write his own music.

Fortunately both men were able to learn music by ear very quickly. Gerald liked to spend time in the Invaders panyard, and he began to bring the melodies he heard there back home for the Hit Paraders to play. The Invaders figured this out, and it reached the point where the band would stop playing the moment they saw Gerald walk into the yard. Tommy shared, “Ellie wasn’t a fan of his.”

Technique

Another thing that differs from the Dixieland story is that the Fernandez brothers did not receive any technical lessons about how to play. They learned by participating and critically reviewing their own performance after the fact. “Some people hold the stick like they want to fight it,” observes Gerald. “You have to hold that stick flexible, just like you holdin’ a bird. Not so it’ll get away, right, but don’t damage it. You must be flexible for that stick to move.”

Notable Hit Paraders

Notable Hit Paraders include Gene Peters, one of the early founders of Starlift Steel Orchestra, and Kelvin Dove, who later became well respected as a tuner.

Not all of the Hit Paraders were middle class teenagers. John ‘Daddy’ Cole, a founder of the steelband Crossroads in St. James, came to beat with Hit Paraders after Crossroads became involved in too many fights.

Emmanuel “Cobo Jack” Riley, originally from Corbeau town, is celebrated as one of the first great improvisers as well as an influential arranger and pan tuner (Johnson 2008). The name Cobo Jack is usually linked with the Invaders steelband, as he played with them for years and represented them in the National Steel Orchestra in the 1960s (Alexis 2009). Prior to joining Invaders, however, Riley developed his skills by playing first in Hellz-a-Poppin’ and then in a band he started with some friends (Riley). This new band, Green Eyes, was based in Woodbrook, and they went to Nazi for tuning. It was during this time that Riley first learned to tune and Riley and his friends also began playing with the Hit Paraders. “He would come down here on Sundays and beat the pan. Just about five or six of them would come in the back there and they would beat,” recalls Gerald. Emmanuel Riley began to tune for Renegades, then Invaders. In the mid-1960s Riley went to the Desperadoes and learned the fine points of tuning from Rudolf Charles. Today he lives in New York, where he plays but primarily

works as a pan tuner. He received a Pan Jazz Life-time Achievement Award at Lincoln Center in 2004 (Riley).

Clifford Alexis, internationally recognized builder, tuner, arranger, and composer was born “behind the bridge” in Laventille, a place where many low income people lived. He lost both parents when he was young and at age eleven moved in with middle class relatives.

Here is his story in his own words:

My beginnings of pan, to me, was heard, probably in my mother womb. I was born on one of several firsts in Trinidad – I was born where one of the first steelbands started. Steelband called Hill 60. And I was quite young; I grew accustomed to seeing people with the biscuit can or biscuit tin as they say, around the neck, and a man with the iron up and down the street, and I saw that with my own eyes. And I guess it proliferated into; you know I seen the Mary had a little lamb pans. This is where I was. Desperadoes was up that way, Tokyo was the other way, there were other bands other places in that areas.

And I was a little boy going to school. It was not unusual for us to stop off by one of those yards and take a little knock [play a note] and run out, cause you can't nobody see you take a knock here and then, run out, you know. But Hill 60 was the band right there. Look out my little window boarded up house. Seeing Andrew de la Bastide. He was a member of the first TASPO. He was leader Hill 60. Seeing him making pan, seeing the convex pans, and all that stuff.

And around eleven we moved away from that area. Went to live in another part of Port of Spain, a place Boissiere village. At that time, we had to concentrate on school. I was one of the unfortunate ones that had no parents, so I was relegated to different family members at any given time. “Go stay here. Go live here.”

Going to school again riding to school, you stop in here take a knock, stop there take a little knock. Can't be seen by even the neighbors or whoever seeing you gonna say they seen you in a panyard. And at that time too, there was a lot of fighting going on between steelband men what they call riots with this band, and that band, and that other band; and you know, stuff like that. And then when I was like fourteen, fifteen, I started venturing into some little bands' yards, but nothing to say I'm a member

of this band. Or I might be going to school and I might pass where the dry river is and there's guys down inside a there poundin' pan an we would go down there, lookin' up to see nobody seeing you.

Then about sixteen I think or maybe fif – I can't remember a guy took me to this band in Woodbrook. "So you want to play pan? And you don't want nobody to see you?" And at that time they had the white band, and this band, and he says, "I'm gonna take you by a band." Tell me where to meet him, jump on my bike, three, four of us went down by this band. This band was called Hit Paraders.

Was just in there, couldn't – nothing. Guy say, "you want to learn how to strum?" Was guy named Gerald Fernandez, and his brother Tommy, and start learnin' how to strum. It was a safe haven because I wasn't living in that area, so I could go there, play with them, jump on my bike and ride home again and nobody know you were there unless Carnival time and somebody downtown and see you in a band.

You know I remember the first time I was seen in a band by my uncle I was livin' there and he says "Anybody who playin' pan in this house cannot stay here. Cannot live here." And you had to play like you don't know what he's saying. You know.

And I stayed there with it where I had heard it was a safe haven. And they call it a white boy band. And they had no fight. You know. So I stayed there and um. I remember quite distinctly playin' with them at a party something in St. James, and a whole bunch a guys from Tripoli was around hanging around see me at that time you had to sit down and play the pan on your lap – was a single second, and say "You should come and play with us" and of course it was a kind of a surprise to me. They say "You playin' good." So I left there and went to Tripoli.

Clifford Alexis went on to play with the Invaders and arrange for the Stereophonics. He was chosen to be a member of the National Steelband of Trinidad and Tobago, and toured the United States in 1964. Alexis emigrated to this country soon after that and eventually settled in St. Paul, Minnesota where he taught and tuned pan in the public schools. He is beginning his twenty-sixth year at Northern Illinois University, where he builds pan, composes, arranges, and co-directs the steelband program with Liam Teague.

Clifford Alexis has been designated a Legend of Pan in 2000 by the Trinidad and Tobago Folk Arts Institute, given a Lifetime Achievement Award from Pantrinbago, and is a member of the Sunshine Hall of Fame.



Figure 5. Clifford Alexis tuning a tenor pan in his office at Northern Illinois University.

Performances

The Hit Paraders performed at many private parties for a variety of occasions, but the band was not usually paid for these performances. The party hosts “would come and transport the pans and bring you back and they will give you eats and drinks,” says Gerald. Sometimes the band would get a monetary tip but that was not expected. Many of the parties that hired the Hit Paraders were social events which were covered by *The Guardian*, and Tommy collected the articles in a large scrapbook.

The Hit Paraders beat mas for Carnival for three or four years, beginning in 1950 or 1951 to 1953. They avoided beating at night, except for the “las’ lap” (last lap), the parade through St. James that happens on Tuesday night just before carnival ends. Not all of the college steelbands in the 1950s beat Carnival Monday or Tuesday, for often the smaller bands did not have enough neighborhood supporters who wanted to “jump up,” along side them for two full days. Steelbands were the preferred music of tired masqueraders on the more relaxed las’ lap, however; all of the steelbands would come out to beat on that night. The narrow streets of St. James would become so crowded, “you have not room in the road,” says Tommy.

The last time the Hit Paraders ever played was for a las’ lap. They decided to join together with two other bands. Here is the story as told by Gerald:

When we came down, our friends Moscow, the Tropitones, came down They played in a bit by the American Embassy (Near the Queen's Park Savannah) Casuals Club- there's a club there that used to have all day parties and Moscow used to beat there Carnival Monday and Tuesday. They haven't pans to come on the road; their pans was what they use to beat like parties and things. So Moscow came down with this boy, and they asked if could join up. And we say "Yes, okay."

But what did we like how they had a bass –and this fella was a big strapping fella - a steel drum. And that steel drum they make a bass, so that bass had more singing in it than ours. We had bass that made outta silver – caustic soda drum. The material is very light so you could not put much real pressure on it. He did. He brought his bass to go with the one or two that we had. And we left here. We went up Ariapita, Ariapita Avenue. Chant up Ariapita, our flag waving in front. Hit Parader flag waving in front.

We left and we going up by the Savannah. We going to pick up Casual crowd again, and come round, and play Woodbrook. But we never reach Casuals Club; When we reach American embassy somehow there was a band. I believe the band was from Belmont, was coming from the other side where in those days was Queen's Park Hotel was a big hotel there. It is now changed from BP; the band was there.

This crowd, boy, to see this big, big crowd they want to know: Who's band this is that have so much people in it? So they send some of their scouts and the scouts came into the band - not going in front to see the flag. They came in to the band and we had some misfits beating with us; they had a lot of problems they had riot an things. So we beatin' las' lap, everybody want to take a little ting in a band, a nice strum with a lot of nice people around the band.

We pass by the American Embassy they start peltin' bottles from the Savannah. The bottles just start to come. I took my tenor pan and I go so [he flips it upside down] and I put it over my head. And people start to pick up drum and all kind a thing and run!

Our father was in the band that night! Somehow we manage to reach home, but somehow we reach home. One of the misfits say, 'Look I feeling so when I beating with this band and these so and so people come and – I goin' back up, I goin' back up!"

I don't know if he went back, whether he went with them, whatever. We came back home, we hear a band coming down, we run in the back there, we have a set of bottle in the back, there a gin bottle, everybody have they self a bottle! If they want to pelt bottles we pelt bottles.

So that was it. Ash Wednesday when the boys came here so Daddy say, 'No more pans.'" They didn't see the flag, they just saw the misfits. If they

had gone in front and seen the Hit Parader flag we woulda been fine. That what happen, so, that was it.

Starlift

After that last Carnival, Gene Peters and two other boys who had played with Hit Paraders met with members of Saigon and Nightengales. On October 22, 1956 they created a new band called Starlift (Johnson 2006, 22). They took the name Starlift from a movie Gerald had seen with them. Gerald had allowed Gene and the other boys to take the pans they had been playing with Hit Paraders, including his own tenor pan. In an interview published in 2008, Starlift iron man Carlton “Maifan” Drayton said that when he began with Starlift in 1956 they played on “old Hit Parader pans Kelvin Dove had tuned” (Johnson 2006, 141).

Gerald watched many Starlift practices, but resisted their invitations to join them because Starlift was a band that rioted. One year when things were calmer, Gerald agreed to play. Unfortunately mid-way through that year Starlift and another band began to fight. Gerald left the band, and went to Silver Stars.

In 1972 Starlift sealed its place in history by playing the first original composition for steelband at a panorama, *Pan on the Move* by Ray Holman (Dudley 2007, 1).

Silver Stars

While many historical accounts do not include the participation of middle class steelbands, those accounts that do always mention the Silver Stars. Like Dixieland, the Silver Stars was a “Chinese band,” because it was founded by Peter

Kwong Sing and brothers Ray and Ronnie Chan in 1951. The band was first named Valentinos and rehearsed in the Chan's backyard for the first year. In 1952 they moved locations and became the Silver Stars. At first the band's members were all St. Mary's College students, but soon students from the Queen's Royal College joined. Nicky Inness, the band's captain, said the teachers at St. Mary's threatened expulsion for students who were participating in a steelband. Fortunately the boys' parents were supportive and their grades were too high to justify expulsion. As time passed views at the school changed; the Silver Stars were invited to play at a graduation ceremony in the mid-1950s (Dudley 2008, 100).

The Silver Stars are said to be the only middle class band that experienced true harassment from the authorities. In the mid-1950s the police raided a rehearsal while they were practicing at the Halfhides' house and made arrests for playing after 8:00pm. A Chinese Lawyer named Lennox Wong fought successfully on their behalf, and the charges were dropped and monetary damages awarded (Johnson 2006, 50).

Junior Pouchet

Many people outside of the Silver Stars community don't know about Peter Sing or the Chan brothers, but they do know about the Silver Star's famous leader and arranger, Edgar "Junior" Pouchet. He joined the band in 1951, and took over as its leader in 1955. Pouchet had been playing the pan since he was thirteen, when his musician parents bought him an Ellie Mannette tenor for his

birthday. The musical arrangements he wrote for Silver Stars were exciting, well crafted, and set a new standard for composition. He was especially known for his introductions, key changes, and interesting bass lines. Junior enjoyed classical music and was admired for his concert arrangements and his bomb tunes (Dudley 2008, 101).

Gerald Fernandez played tenor with Silver Stars for almost six years. It was easy for him to join Silver Stars because Junior knew Gerald could play well. For the Silver Stars' "tune of choice" at the 1960 Steelband Music Festival, Junior arranged the Berceuse from Benjamin Godard's Opera *Jocelyn*, in the style of the Mantovani Orchestra. Gerald was a member of that band, and witnessed Junior dismiss a valued player for insubordination. In a 2008 interview with the author, Gerald recalled:

1960 World Music Festival. And we would go preliminary round and Silver Stars would come second. Every time we go and we beat with the band, we come second. We come second. To get to the final now, we had some time and Junior say okay, "We have the test piece." We play the test piece -it was a calypso piece - and then you have a tune of your choice, which he said, "I'll bring a classic; Mantovani, Berceuse Jocelyn."

See he want, said he wanted that but none of us knew, with exception of him, knew the tune, so it would get more difficult to know. So I will go down, everyday he comin' and showing a note. Play it over and over so we can get to understand the tune. It took us one month to learn that tune. And it was well put to rhythm. It was well put to rhythm. And it was real.

Three, one two three: The results were Invaders, Dixieland, then Silver Stars. The rest of the bands were out of it, completely out of it.

But the [final] festival was Monday night. And Sunday we doin' a rehearsal, [To] one of the beaters Junior say, 'You will beat the tenor. After we beat the Mantovani. We beating that first (we beatin the test tune last). After we finish that we will ask the people to pull the curtain so we can switch round some of the people.'

ED: *Switch pans.*

GF: Fella who beat tenor...he stand up in front...now he goin' in de back...He say [No].

ED: *He didn't want that* [to play in back of the band on the second piece].

GF: Junior say, "You not doin' it? Then go- walk."

ED: *So how many people were there in the band for that competition?*

GF: I can't remember. I don't think it was more than fifteen. So we went up minus this fella, We get 5th out a 7. The fella came back [for] a repeat performance. When we beat that second time people wanted to know how we won 5th last week. The people outside wouldn't know.

ED: *Did you switch the second time?*

GF: No.

Gerald stated that Junior Pouchet's actions during the 1960 Music Festival was a typical example of his leadership style; while he was willing to dismiss a player from a performer and jeopardize his band's score in order to fulfill a creative vision, he was also willing to compromise that same idea in order to bring a valued player back into the group.

Performances

The Silver Stars were often asked to play parties, and some performances were in remote places. One woman hired them to play a weekend party on a beautiful island in the South. To get across to the islands they had to balance their pans in low, skinny fishing boats and be rowed slowly across the sea. Of course they had to do the same thing to come back across the next day.

During Carnival season, "Silver Stars was the band in demand." It was not uncommon for the band to play at four different fetes in one night. Gerald was one of eight or nine Silver Stars "stage side" beaters, permanent members who

played the entire year. Many additional pannists joined the band for Carnival. On nights with multiple engagements, Junior would split up the stage side band and assign a couple of them to each location. Then he would assign a few of the Carnival players to each location to create full combos. The only music people wanted to hear the Carnival was calypso, so the band would learn six different calypsos and “you beat that the whole night and day,” remembers Gerald.

Tuning

In addition to playing for Silver Stars, Gerald built some pans for the band. Gerald used the tuning skills he had learned from Nazi and tuned bass with Junior Pouchet. A friendly rivalry grew between Gerald and Junior about who could tune the “sweetest” bass. This resulted in strong, singing instruments that worked well with Junior’s arrangements. Gerald specialized in tuning the “high” basses, and Junior focused on the “low” basses. One of Gerald’s favorite memories is of a day when he and Junior tuned basses in the Fernandez yard, and then rolled them straight into town to Frederick Street. The bands were beating “Old Man River” in a jam session, and the new basses joined in. Gerald remembers looking up and seeing the electric wires shaking from the vibration. “The the best (sounding) part of Silver Stars was the background,” he says.

Bands with Contingent Membership

In the early 1960s some Trinidadian businesses began to hire small steelbands on multiple –date professional contracts. Many of these jobs went to players from the middle class bands. Just as Gerald Fernandez was about to retire

from Silver Stars, he was invited to play in a professional steelband at the

Trinidad Hilton hotel:

Some of the boys say, "Hey boy, we have a little side boy; come join us." Dixieland, ex-Dixieland beaters, excellent beaters. So we join up. We used to rehearse. And we were the first band to sign a contract to beat at Hilton, two nights a week, seven to nine. A lot a big bands apply and they turn them down because "Steelband riots we don't want it." But anyhow we went. We had the contract on. We beat there.

The fellas and them, they say, "okay, rehearsal tonight. Rehearsin' Friday night." Jump on my bicycle from here, sitting down waitin'. They say from seven o'clock. Seven to eight. They ain't start to walk in the yard eight o'clock. Now the Hilton was payin' us! Hilton was payin' us. So I tell them, "If you are beating in a place and they are payin' you, at least learn a new tune every time ya go!" But they didn't want it to do. So you see this, there's two of us were getting married within three months apart, and the two of us were then playing the tenor part. We just had about about six or eight (players).

Every night [the Hilton] used to tell us, "Stop at nine o'clock." If we want to beat another two, they say no. Nine o'clock on the dot a fellow would come. Okay. Go down in the alley, and they will give us refreshments and thing, we will come home. Captain say whatever money say look [divide it up]. Everybody get a little piece. And we were happy.

What I tell them that, "you all don't want to rehearse? That is it. Bye bye." I left there. When I left there and the other fella left them too. I told them that you cannot entertain and play the same tunes. It don't make sense.

Tommy and the Invaders

After the Hit Paraders broke up, Tommy Fernandez stopped playing pan regularly. Every Carnival he played with Silver Stars, however he would join the Invaders on the road for their J'Ouvert, which was legendary. Here is Gerald and Tommy's description of the scene:

TF: J'Ouvert Invaders would bring Biscuit tin in the yard. Band, J'Ouvert band Invaders were the biggest band. Four o'clock in the morning, nobody could pass you know; No traffic could pass you know! They bring every pan on the road.

GF: J'Ouvert morning was the "heavy rollers" you call them.

TF: Because on J'Ouvert they chip very very slow. (He scats a fast tune) No; They takin' their *time* very, very, slow going down the road.

GF: Chip, nice chip.

TF: They really *made* J'Ouvert. They say, "You ain't play J'Ouvert with Invader, ya never played Mas!"

Tommy and his friend Felix Jones played J'Ouvert as a team. They carried only one side of the double seconds and switched off every couple of hours. "I beat from 8 to 10," explains Tommy, "When I see 10 o'clock Felix come take the pan I go [dance]. That is the good idea about it."

Relationships Between Steelbands

College vs. Grassroots

Accounts of the relationship between college bands and grassroots bands differ, with the deciding factors being visibility, location, and money. Junior Pouchet recalls feeling resentment from some grassroots panmen because the Silver Stars were hired for many private parties.

Gerald Fernandez states that most grassroots bands didn't care, or didn't even know that the Hit Paraders were playing at the time because they weren't playing any competitions. When the Hit Paraders played mas' they did not usually encounter the Laventille or Belmont grassroots bands on their routes. The Woodbrook-based Invaders knew the band well, as Mannette had done some tuning and Gerald was a familiar presence in the yard. The Invaders took on a

protective role on at least one occasion. During the 1951 Carnival the Hit Paraders beat out of Woodbrook and headed into downtown Port of Spain, where all of the grass-roots bands played mas'. They saw the Invaders coming up the road and the Hit Paraders tried to fall in and join the bigger band. The Invaders captain saw them and scolded them. "What MMMM you doing in town? Ya not supposed to be in town! Get the MMMM up the road! You white boys get the MMMM out the road!"⁹

In general, interactions between college and grassroots players were neutral, and even friendly. While the college boys knew they wouldn't exist without the grassroots bands, many grassroots players realized the improvements that college bands brought to their art form. In his book *Music from Behind the Bridge: Steelband Spirit and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*, Dr. Shannon Dudley points out that "just as the college boys were indebted to the grass-roots panmen for instruments and instruction, the grassroots panmen were indebted to the college boys for certain musical influences." The involvement of a greater portion of the population in pan, and the increased sophistication in pan music, stimulated advancements in pan tuning technology. Many college bands, such as Dixieland, depended on grassroots panmen for instruments, tuning, and technical skills to get started. The Hit Paraders differ greatly in that area.

⁹ When Tommy Fernandez relayed this story to me, he told me he was humming in place of the expletives yelled by the Invaders captain.

College vs. College

Relationships between college steelbands were often friendly, and sometimes the small bands helped each other with resources. The Hit Paraders experienced these kinds of relationships, for example joining up for a las' lap, or giving Gerald's tenor to Starlift. Strong rivalries did exist, particularly around competitions such as the Music Festival. Some violence occurred but it was muted and issue-specific, for example Nightengales and Stromboli often had fights over girls (Steumpfle 1995, 103).

National Success of College Boy Bands

Some of the college boy bands, like the Hit Paraders, existed only for a few years. Other college boy bands grew into nationally recognized organizations that achieved great levels of success.

In the first ten years of Panorama competitions, only five steelbands placed first: North Stars, Cavaliers, Desperadoes, Harmonites, and Starlift. It is significant that one of these, Starlift, was formed by middle class players. Eight other bands placed second and third in that first decade of Panorama competitions: Dixieland, Highlanders, Invaders, Silver Stars, Sundowners, Tripoli, West Side Symphony, and Tokyo. Two of these bands, Dixieland and Silver Stars were college boy bands.

Dixieland dissolved in the early 1970s, but Starlift and Silver Stars have remained strong. Starlift won Panorama in 1978 and continues to reach the final

round of the large conventional band regularly. Silver Stars were the 2009 and 2010 Panorama Large Conventional band champions.

The involvement of Indian youth in the college bands encouraged younger Indians who were interested in the instrument. In the latter half of the 1960s there were some “Indian steelbands” such as the Saraswati Steel Orchestra, that learned Indian music and played Indian weddings. The most famous band leader and arranger to come about at that time is Jit Samaroo, who led the Renegades for many years before recently passing the reigns to his son Amrit.

Other Major Factors in Steelpan Acceptance

Corporate Sponsorship

General sponsorship accelerated in 1951 after TASPO formed and went on its first tour. Shell Oil and Pan American Airlines were some of the first companies to sponsor bands. More companies became sponsors as the popularity and exposure of steelbands increased, especially with the creation of Panorama in 1963. By the mid -1960s high-profile companies such as Angostura, Coca Cola, Guinness, Solo Bottling Works, and Carib Brewery were supporting steelbands.

The advent of widespread corporate sponsorship played a large role in decreasing the violence between steelbands. Corporate sponsorship funds were used for many things, including instruments, uniforms, tuning, composer and arranger fees, and travel. This meant that bands did not have to fight each other for instruments and resources. There were additional benefits: a sponsorship was not only a source of funding, but a source of legitimacy for the band and pride for

individual band members. Desperadoes captain George Yeates remembers that after the West Indian Tobacco Company began to sponsor his band in the 1950s, he saw much better behavior out of the men. He said they didn't want to misbehave and lose the sponsorship (Aho 1987).

As inter-steelband violence ceased with sponsorship, more middle class pannists, and especially more women, began to play. Eventually the separate "college boy" and "grassroots" steelband categories dissolved.¹⁰ Some of the original "college boy" bands broke up and their members went on to form other bands, as the Hit Paraders did. Other college bands merged together, or with a grassroots band.

Political and Governmental Support

Albert Gomes

In 1945 the Legislative Council of Port of Spain passed a Noise Ordinance that limited the hours that instrumental ensembles could play in public areas. Council Member Albert Gomes, argued against the measure, stating that the legislation was obviously aimed at curtailing the activities of the steelbands and that the individuals who's complaints had inspired the ordinance "were guided as much by their social prejudices as they were by their sensitivities to noise" (*Trinidad Guardian*, 1945).

¹⁰ There were a few middle-class pannists who played in grassroots bands in the 1940s, and the college bands encouraged a "second generation" of middle class players who learned in grassroots bands, e.g. Ray Holman, who grew up down the street from the Hit Paraders. He began with the Invaders in 1956.

Gomes had championed Trinidad and Tobago's folk culture in published writings since the 1920s. He was part of a collective of authors who produced a regular publication, *The Beacon*, which advocated nationalism by championing West Indian, African, and Indian history and culture (Steumpfle 1995, 78). They argued that true independence for Trinidad and Tobago would only happen when the country celebrated its people's original art and music.

As Gomes continued his writing and political career he was a vital advocate for the steelbands. He had dreamed of sending a steelband abroad years before TASPO went to Britain. Gomes' writings connected with members of the urban middle class who began to embrace steelband and carnival culture after World War II. These middle class supporters increased after the college boy bands formed. Albert Gomes had a regular newspaper column as well, which he used as a forum to promote steelbands as musicians who create art, not noise, as many others believed. Each time an article about the steelbands drew a negative response, other readers responded favorably. The result was open discussion about the steelbands and their music.

Norman Tang

By the mid 1950s politicians realized they could use the popularity of the steelbands to their advantage. Norman Tang from Woodbrook was one of the first to regularly hire a steelband to perform at his public appearances. One band that he hired was the Merry Makers, and he also helped them acquire new instruments

and jobs. This was in turn for their support; at election time they were expected to help canvass the neighborhood for votes (Steumpfle 2003, 116).

Dr. Eric Williams and the People's National Movement Party

The most powerful politician to support the steelbands was Dr. Eric Williams, leader of the People's National Movement (PNM) party. Launched in 1956, the PNM party aimed to transcend race and be truly national in scope, and believed that if Trinidad and Tobago were to gain independence, it needed to build a national identity.

Dr. Williams respected steelband music and knew that steelpannists were not uncivilized hoodlums. A college boy band is responsible for Dr. William's understanding of pan; he had married the sister of Rolf Moyou, a Dixieland beater. The band rehearsed in the Moyou backyard in the early 1950s, and Rolf remembers that Dr. Williams used to listen from the window and sometimes give suggestions (Johnson, 2006, 51).

Dr. Williams and the People's National Movement leadership were largely middle-class, and they wanted to unite grassroots and middle-class people behind their platform. The opposition Democratic Labour Party (DLP) became increasingly Indian and French Creole in the late 1950s (Dudley 2008, 143).

Steelbands were closely involved in the political ascent of the People's National Movement. Williams thoroughly understood the functions and symbolic value of steelbands in communities and established firm relations with the steelband movement in order to elicit and maintain grass-roots support. Steelband leaders became his personal assistants and he regularly visited panyards (Steumpfle 1995, 118).

While Williams and the PNM were shrewd to use the steelbands to gain political advantage over their opponents, Dr. Williams was sincerely interested in giving a full hearing to the concerns of the pan community. In 1956 members of the Desperadoes presented an idea to him: many pannists needed jobs, and much of the village infrastructure needed repair, so out-of-work pannists should be employed in public works. The PNM's response was the Crash program, which expanded into the Special Works program and eventually the Development and Environmental Works Division. These programs provided thousands of jobs to panmen and others (Steumpfle 2003, 119).

In the early 1950s certain Carnival events, such as the Carnival Queen competition, were seen as elitist and racist by the lower classes. Other Carnival traditions, such as steelbands, were confined to the streets and not allowed on the grand stage at the Queen's Park Savannah. The PNM created the Carnival Development Committee in 1956 in order to organize and promote activities for Carnival (Steumpfle 2003, 120). This committee took control of the schedule, contest prize money, and instituted new carnival events, including steelband concerts and contests that would eventually become Panorama. The end result was a more equitable distribution of prize money, fairer scheduling, and greater respect for all Carnival traditions and Trinbagonians.

National Identity

In 1962 the People's National Movement, the Democratic Labour Party, and Britain reached an agreement, and on August 31 Trinidad and Tobago became

an independent nation. Newly-minted Prime Minister Eric Williams and other government leaders continued to attend concerts and support the steelbands and other West Indian, Indian, and African cultural events. The government understood that “all nations need a national identity and in the post-colonial situation a national identity becomes even more important because it reinforces the culture, values and political standing of the nation” (Nathaniel 2006, 177). The public was strongly influenced by the new government’s support of steelpan and steelbands, and in a few short years, steelpan and steelbands were near the center of mainstream Trinidadian culture. “This new awakening in the whole society to the fact that the folk and their art and craft are important, must be put down squarely to the attitude of the new government” (Elder 1968, 25-26).

Conclusion

When the government voted in 1992 to officially designate the steelpan as the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, some citizens objected on the grounds that the pan was originally invented and developed by Africans, and that the history of pan was a violent one. The government’s response to those concerns was this: Trinidad and Tobago itself has a violent history, and regardless of who may have first invented this instrument, pan has become an art form that is practiced and enjoyed by Trinbagonians from all economic and ethnic backgrounds (Nathaniel 2006, 129).

“College boy,” or “white boy” steelbands elevated the stature of pan by creating a wide and deep acceptance of the instrument throughout the Trinidadian

population. When middle class, non-African youth began to play the steelpan, their families and neighbors gained a greater appreciation for the instrument and its music. These youths then formed steelbands that performed at middle- and upper-class venues for audiences who had either never heard the steelpan before, or who had never listened without socioeconomic prejudice. Influential writers and intellectuals, who championed the steelbands as important indigenous folk art, pointed to college bands as proof that this music was national in scope, and the decades-long relationship between the steelbands and the People's National Movement Party can be traced back to the early 1950s, when Dr. Eric Williams listened to Dixieland practice in the yard below him. College boys were essential vectors for the transmission of steelpan music into mainstream Trinidadian society, and the esteem in which the steelpan and its music is currently held could not have been attained without their contributions.

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APPENDIX A:

STEELPAN DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

APPENDIX A: STEELPAN DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE: INNOVATORS AND INNOVATION BY VOICE

Year	Innovator	Other	Soprano	Alto	Baritone	Bass
1931	basic bamboo bamboo instrumentation		cutter	foule		boom
1935	Gonzales bamboo bamboo band					first type of bass pan
1936	Alexander's Ragtime Band	sweet oil pans & dustbins, wood sticks, convex shape				
1938/9			ping pong: 3 notes			
1940/1	Ellie Mannette	first concave pan				
early 1940s	Eddie Meyers (Oval Boys)	first to bum a pan				
1941	Basic steel ensemble			tenor kettle: 3 notes, paint can		cuff boom: biscuit tin and dudup: 2 notes, caustic soda drum

1943	Neville Jules/ Mannette/ Southern band	rubber-tipped sticks					
1945	basic steel ensemble		ping pong: 5-7 notes, sweet oil drum	tenor kittle: 5 notes		cuff boom & dudup:	
1945-8	Mannette, others	44, 45 gallon drums					
1946	Anthony Williams	tries 55 gallon drum					
	Spree Simon		ping pong 8 notes				
	Jules				balay, chu-fat, grumbler, grundig	tune boom	
	Jules or Sonny Roach						
	Mannette		ping pong 15 notes				
1947	Phil Wiltshire maybe Andrew Beddoe, tuners	Cyril "Snatcher" Guy performs on 55-gallon pan					
	Williams		semitones				
	Jules				cuatro		
	Philmore "Booths" Davidson				guitar		
	Mannette or Beddoe	first to etch note outlines					

1947-8						single second developed		
1949	Jules							caustic soda drum bass
	Southern Symphony Mannette	3 sticks to play chords						
1950	Steelband Association, College bands							
1951	TASPO	all voices chromatic and 55-gallon						
	Williams							
	Jules							bass
1952	steelbands join Trinidad Music Festival							
	Patrick Thomas	swivel wheel for stand legs						
	Williams begins to lead North Stars	metal stands, wood stands, chord strumming, legs						
	Percy "Lizard" Thomas							
	Mannette					double seconds		
								5 notes in bass

Late 1952	Mannette			whole-tone double seconds			
1953	Williams		"spider-web" 4ths and 5ths tenor pan				
1956	Bertie Marshall	tunes harmonics				wheels on basses for Carnival	
	Williams						
1958	Mannette				triple cello, whole tone guitar		
1959					Mannette revamps triple cello, new note layout		
1960		North Stars first band on wheels					
	Marshall		stretches 4ths/5ths pan from 4 to 6.5 inches fits more notes, improves tone				
	Mannette					tenor bass	
	Marshall		invents double tenor, 31 notes				
1962	Marshall begins leading the Highlanders	innovations include: canopies over pans	harmonics popular in tenor and double tenor				6 bass on road

1964	Rudolph Charles begins leading the Desperadoes	innovations: chromed pans, aluminum canopies				9 bass, rocket bass
1968	Marshall becomes tuner for Desperadoes.	use of strobe tuner				
	Marshall and Charles				Quadrophonic	12 bass
1970	Williams		26" and 29" tenor pans, allowing 36 notes clear tones			
	Marshall	Marshall tone pan: 6-pan extended range solo instrument				
1996	Mannette	quaduet pan: 4-pan extended range solo instrument				
Sources: data from Abstract Entertainment 2006, Alexis, Batson 1995; Belgrave; Dudley, 2008; Haskett, 2009; Johnson 2006 and 2011; Mannette; Pantrinbago; Raradath; Steel Island: When Steel Talks, History of Steelpan Timeline.						

APPENDIX B:

STEELBAND MUSIC FESTIVAL WINNERS 1952-1972

APPENDIX B: STEELBAND MUSIC FESTIVAL WINNERS 1952- 1972

Year	Steelband	Arranger	Piece	Composer
1952	1	Boys Town		
	2	Southern Symphony	You Are My Heart's Delight	
	3	All Stars		
TEST PIECE: Calendar or Old Creole Melodies: I am tired of Searching or Under the Marabella Bridge				
1954	1	Southern All Stars	Anna	Vaco Roman & F. Giordano
	2	Trinidad All Stars		
	3	Casablanca		
1956	1	Katzenjammers	The Breeze and I	Ernesto Lecuona
	2	Southern All Stars	Star of Hope	
	3	Southern Symphony	Tongo, Montevideo Samba Maria Elena	
TEST PIECE: For Steel Orchestra by Azie George				
1958	no competition - polio epidemic			
1960	1	Dixieland	Curtis Pierre	Agnas Dei, Estadientia
	2	Invaders	Jocelyn Pierre	Ina Monastery Garden
	3	Sundowners	Junior Pouchet	Skaters Waltz
	5th Silver Stars	Pat Castagne, ping pong test piece: Queen of the Caribbean by Umita McShine	Beceuse de Jocelyn	Benjamin Godard
TEST PIECE: Treasure Island				
1962	1	North Stars	Tony Williams	Voices of Spring
	2	Invaders	Lennox Pierre	People of the Islands
	3	Metronomes	Junior Pouchet	Meditation
	4	Silver Stars		Romance in E Romance in F

TEST PIECE: by Umilta McShine

"Independence Festival"

1963	1	Crossfire	Juliana Castillana	
	2	Silver Stars	Moon over Maracaibo	
	3	Merry Stars Metronomes	Kiss me I of Christmas	Pat Castagne
		TEST PIECE: Steelbands Invented Here by Cecil Huarte		
1964	1	West Side Symphony	Roses From the South	Johann Strauss
			True Love	
	2	Starlift	Ray Holman	George Frederick Handel
	3	Cavaliers	Lennox Mohammed	
	4	Tripoli	Hugh Borde	
	5	Metronomes	The Man I Love	
	6	Savoys	March Militaire	
	7	Invaders	Serenade for Strings	Wolfgang A. Mozart
		TEST PIECE: Voice of the Pan Man by Lennox Pierre		
1966	1	North Stars	Tony Williams	Franz Von Suppe
			Poet and Peasant Ov.	Johann Strauss
	2	Cavaliers "best arrangement"	Roses from the South	George Bizet
	3	Syncopaters trophy "Best performance of Classical"	Carmen Suite No. 1	Poet and Peasant - Suppe
		TEST PIECE: Intermezzo in Eb by Anthony Prospect or Eine Kleine Nachmusik		
1967		Independence fest	50% of the bands were sponsored	separate categories for sponsored
1968		Five pieces were required		
	1	Trinidad All Stars	Minuet Eb, Schubert's unfinished, This is My Song, Mazican	
	2	Cordettes	Dance Antique, Morning Noon Night Ov. (Suppe) Jane, Cascade Alan Tonquist	
	3	Tokyo	Etude E, Classical Memories - Montague, Meditation(Massenet) Miss Tourist	

***Fascination calypso "Viking" unsuitable: guilty of hitting pans too hard military fashion
 TEST PIECE: Sunday Morning by Benjamin Britten

- 1970 *no competition*
- 1972 Calypso and classical tunes of choice
 1 All Stars
 2 Casablanca
 3 Blue Diamonds
 TEST PIECE: Maracas Bay by Supt. Anthony Prospect
 New World, Miss Harriman Dvorak

Sources: Maxime 1993, Pan on the Net

APPENDIX C:

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PANORAMA WINNERS 1963-1972

APPENDIX C: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PANORAMA WINNERS 1963-1972

Year	Place	Steelband	Arranger	Piece	Composer
1963	1	North Stars	Anthony Williams	Dan is the Man	Mighty Sparrow
	2	Sundowners	Steve Regis	Harry & Mama	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Desperadoes	Beverly Griffith	The Road	Lord Kitchener
1964	1	North Stars	Anthony Williams	Dis is Mas	Lord Kitchener
	2	Desperadoes	Beverly Griffith	Dis is Mas	Lord Kitchener
	3	Starlift	Ray Holman	Bullpistle Gang	Mighty Sparrow
1965	1	Cavaliers	Lennox Mohammed	Mas	Lord Melody
	2	North Stars	Anthony Williams	Hold on to Your Man	Lord Kitchener
	3	West Side Symphony	Herman Johnston	Steering Wheel	Mighty Sparrow
1966	1	Desperadoes	Beverly Griffith	Obeah Wedding	Mighty Sparrow
	2	Cavaliers	Lennox Mohammed	My Brother Your Sister	Lord Kitchener
	3	Highlanders	Leslie Slater	Obeah Wedding	Mighty Sparrow
1967	1	Cavaliers	Lennox Mohammed	Sixty-Seven	Lord Kitchener
	2	Desperadoes	Beverly Griffith	Governor's Ball	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Tripoli	Hugh Borde	No Money No Love	Mighty Sparrow
1968	1	Harmonites	Earl Rodney	Wrecker	Lord Kitchener
	2	Starlift	Ray Holman	Jane	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Dixieland	Curtis Pierre	Miss Tourist	Lord Kitchener

Year	Place	Steelband	Arranger	Piece	Composer
1969	1	Starlift	Ray Holman	The Bull	Lord Kitchener
	2	Cavaliers	Lennox Mohammed	Mas in Brooklyn	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Harmonites	Earl Rodney	Bongo	Mighty Sparrow
1970	1	Desperadoes	Clive Bradley	Margie	Lord Kitchener
	2	Starlift	Ray Holman	Pan Man	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Invaders	Mackie Boyce	Margie	Lord Kitchener
	3	Silver Stars	Junior Pouchet	Simple Calypso	Blakie
1971	1	Harmonites	Earl Rodney	Play Mas	Lord Kitchener
	1	Starlift	Ray Holman	Queen of the Bands	Mighty Sparrow
	3	Invaders	Mackie Boyce	Mas in Madison	Lord Kitchener
1972	1	Harmonites	Earl Rodney	St. Thomas Girl	Lord Kitchener
	2	Tokyo	Gerald "Belly" Charles	Miss Harriman	Lord Kitchener
	3	Starlift	Ray Holman	Pan on the Move	Ray Holman

Sources: Data from Dudley 2008; Pantrinbago, Panorama 123 Placings; When Steel Talks, Panorama Winners