

NSSBE Conference 2018: A Reflection

Chris Tanner
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The National Society of Steel Band Educators held its inaugural annual professional conference on Saturday, March 10, 2018 on the campus of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Over fifty people attended the conference, hailing from twenty different states across the nation. Attendees included educators working in diverse settings such as universities, secondary schools and community ensembles, students, and vendors representing various areas of the steel band industry.

Members of the NSSBE Board of Directors and Steering Committee were on site to witness the historic occasion, as the organization welcomed clinicians Jason Koontz, Dave Longfellow and Victor Provost. Both Koontz's and Longfellow's sessions, focusing on percussion instruments and techniques, featured a great deal of audience participation, as attendees worked together to perform traditional Brazilian and Trinidadian grooves, respectively. Provost, widely regarded as one of the leading voices in the steel pan milieu today, discussed and demonstrated his personal approach to pan technique, focusing on his primary instrument, the lead or tenor pan.

A panel discussion featuring Steering Committee members Patty Dee, Matt Dudack and Emily Lemmerman, along with local pan educator Ed LeBorgne (Walnut Hills HS, Cincinnati), took questions from those in attendance, leading to a robust and engaging discussion on a number of topics. Dr. Brandon Haskett, who moderated the session, found it to be a very useful and important session, noting, "Members had great questions about teaching practices, music literature grading, and music selection. The sharing of ideas during this part of the conference was crucial."

The day culminated in a performance featuring Victor Provost as soloist with both the Miami University Steel Band, directed by NSSBE President Chris Tanner. Provost also performed several numbers accompanied by a trio of jazz artists from Southwest Ohio: Rusty Burge, vibraphone; Michael Sharfe, bass; and John Taylor, drums.

The first NSSBE conference brought pan educators and students together to share ideas, hear from outstanding artists in the discipline, and perhaps most importantly, to spend time getting to know each other. As Tanner said in his opening remarks, "The relationships that will be created anew or strengthened today at this organized professional meeting will be without doubt its most significant outcome." For the entire text of Tanner's remarks, [see here](#).

Plans are already underway for the organization's 2019 annual conference, and an announcement on date and location is expected by April. Mike Greer and Mike Wendeln, who did an outstanding job serving as Co-Chairs of the 2018 conference, will resume those duties again in 2019. Watch this site, and the Steel Band Directors Facebook page, for announcements and updates on the 2019 conference, coming soon.

