

The Steel Times

Vol. 3, No. 1 August 2020

A Publication of NSSBE

Tripoli as a Family Band.

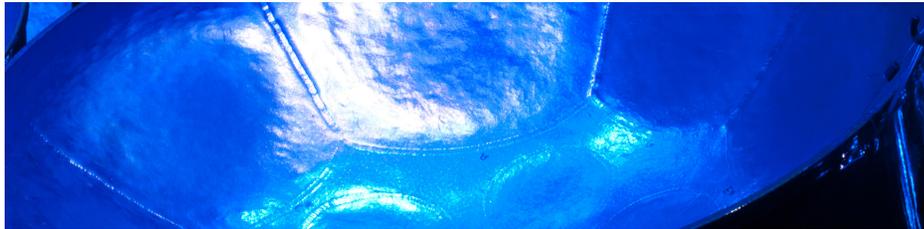


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Vol. 3, No. 1 August 2020

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Eugene Novotney



Photo—Kelly Jo Brown

EUGENE NOVOTNEY is a percussionist, composer, and scholar who has been involved in the steelpan movement in the United States since 1982. He is Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, where he directs the Humboldt State Calypso Band. He has received the Humboldt State University Outstanding Professor Award, the California State University Wang Family Excellence Award, and the Caribbean International Sunshine Award for his lifetime commitment to music education.

Welcome to The Steel Times, Volume 3, Number 1. I think that we may all agree that 2020 has been a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way that we all function in the steelband community. Live performances have been transformed into virtual presentations, and face-to-face teaching has been replaced by Zoom meetings and other forms of virtual instruction. Many of us are deeply missing rehearsing and performing with our steelbands and the personal interactions that are embedded in the steelband experience. There is nothing I enjoy more in life than playing music with people and for people. I trust that we will all be doing that again at some point in time, and I cannot wait for that reality to once again be upon us. But for now, we must stay focused, remember how our steelband experiences have enriched our lives, and

anticipate the great times that are surely to come in the future.

This issue of The Steel Times pays tribute to a true pioneer of the steelband artform in the United States, Hugh Borde, and details the history and evolution of the world-famous Trinidad Tripoli Steelband. My thanks go out to the authors, Ray Funk and Andrew Martin, for their excellent writing and for their dedication to sharing their research with the steelband world. This issue also contains several very useful and pertinent articles that address the current state of the steelband world. In his column, We Kinda Pan, Andy Narell shares his vast experience with microphones, and details best practices developed through his years of experience miking and recoding steelpans. With so many of us focused on recording ourselves these days, I find this article to be extremely valuable and timely. Joe Galvin has contributed an excellent article where he shares his ideas about developing the steelpan artform during the pandemic era. Joe has used the limitations brought on by the COVID-19 era as a springboard for experimentation and innovation and has come up with some very interesting solutions to share with the steelband world. And Mike Schwebke's article provides some very practical ideas in a step-by-step format for anyone commissioning a composer to create a new work for the steelpan.

While many of us find ourselves practicing our technique while spending a lot more time at home, this issue features two articles that detail useful exercises to develop dexterity and fluidity on the steelpan. In the first of these two articles, Dave Gerhart shares his ideas for adapting the classic xylophone exercises of George Hamilton Green to all of the steelpan instruments, and in the second article, I have contributed my favorite exercise to ingrain sticking concepts for the chromatic scale as applied to the circle of 4th and 5th tenor pan. This issue ends with a sincere and powerful article contributed by Emily Lemmerman. Emily shares her own personal experiences coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, while also providing a voice to some other important members of our steelband community, including Josanne Francis, Andre White, CJ Menge, Ben Leggett, and Ron Hughes.

As the editor of The Steel Times, I am very proud of our publication, and I appreciate the opportunity to serve the NSSBE and the entire steelband community. I hope that you find this latest edition to be informative, useful and current.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Chris Tanner



CHRIS TANNER is the founder and Director of the Miami University Steel Band in Oxford, Ohio, and the Chair of the Miami University Department of Music. He is the author of *The Steel Band Game Plan*, and serves as President and founding member of the National Society of Steel Band Educators (NSSBE).

Nearly one year has elapsed since the publication of our last issue of The Steel Times. At that time, as we prepared for the beginning of a new academic year, I wrote of getting "back to the routine." How naïve this seems, in retrospect. As we are all painfully aware, the year 2020 has been anything but routine. Assistant Editor Emily Lemmerman has captured the sentiments of so many in her heartfelt article that closes this issue, and I thank her for sharing her feelings with such intimacy and openness.

The passing in early 2020 of yet another pioneer of pan, Trinidad's Hugh Borde, has occasioned the wonderful tribute offered by Ray Funk and Andrew Martin. This is the third consecutive issue that has featured a seminal figure in our discipline, and while it is good to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of these iconic figures, there is a palpable sadness as we also must acknowledge the loss of yet another stalwart.

I had the great pleasure of meeting Hugh Borde several years ago, when his family band came to Miami University for a performance sponsored by our office of Student Affairs. I invited Hugh to speak to my students, and he graciously agreed. It was an evening filled with smiles, as he recounted a small number of the multitude of memories he had amassed over a lifetime of devotion to music-making. I remain grateful to Hugh and his family for sharing that time with us.

Despite the challenges that this global pandemic has caused, life, in a certain sense, goes on. Leaders in our field such as those who have contributed to this issue are continuing the good work that they do, even as they adapt to new ways of doing it. It is always the goal of NSSBE to provide useful information and best practices to our readers, in fulfillment of our mission. Unless I am mistaken, you will also find inspiration here – a sorely needed commodity these days.

What else is needed is a recognition that the performing arts face an existential crisis. Performers need each other, and an audience, to do what we do. The increasing presence of electronics in our lives, to the point where screens are ubiquitous, has conferred numerous and welcome benefits, as the amount of information at our beck and call is virtually limitless. At the same time, the steady creep of screen time into our way of life surely has led, inexorably, to the idea that live performance – a shared experience among performers and audiences, in which a momentary community is realized – may be casually set aside, rather than embraced as an essential component of human life and understanding.

Performing artists and educators must push back against this misguided notion, and strongly. Any future opportunity to rehearse or perform music together in a face-to-face setting should be viewed as a chance to remind our fellows (and ourselves) of the striking differences between this and virtual modes of interacting. Watching great performances on a screen, whether archival or streamed live, is just not the same as being together in the same room. We must first recognize this, and then bring all our energy to bear in persuading our friends and neighbors that making music together, before a live audience, is precious and irreplaceable.

It has been said in these pages, and time after time elsewhere, that the story of the steelpan is one of struggle, determination, and persistence in the face of difficult conditions and unfavorable odds. Let us take this lesson to heart in advocating continually and vociferously for our art form, and indeed for all the arts, moving forward.

Regards,

Chris Tanner
President, NSSBE

WE KINDA PAN

Andy Narell



Andy Narell is one of the best known and most recorded steelpan artists in the world. He is internationally recognized as a world-class performer, composer, arranger, and scholar, and he was recently inducted into the Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame for his lifetime of contributions to the steelpan artform.

Pan players often ask me for advice about microphones—which ones to use, where to place them, what differences there are between studio and live situations. So here's some of what I've learned. I hope it's helpful.

Most of what I know about microphones and engineering I learned in recording studios, working with engineers who were invariably willing to share their knowledge. I recorded a few times in New York when I was a kid, but started playing sessions regularly and paying attention to engineering after I moved to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1970. I was 16 and started my education working with engineers like Fred Catero (Blood Sweat and Tears, Chicago, Santana, Janis Joplin, Herbie Hancock), Roy Halee (Simon and Garfunkel, Paul Simon), Roy Segal, Phil Edwards, Steven Miller, Leslie Ann Jones. In the 80's and 90's I did a lot of recording in Los Angeles with engineers like Allen Sides, George Massenburg, Don Murray, and Rick Pekonin, as well as film scores

with Dan Wallin, Shawn Murphy, Joel Moss, Bob Fernandez, Dennis Sands—all legendary engineers with thousands of credits. The film scores gave me another perspective on recording, since many of those sessions were with a live orchestra.

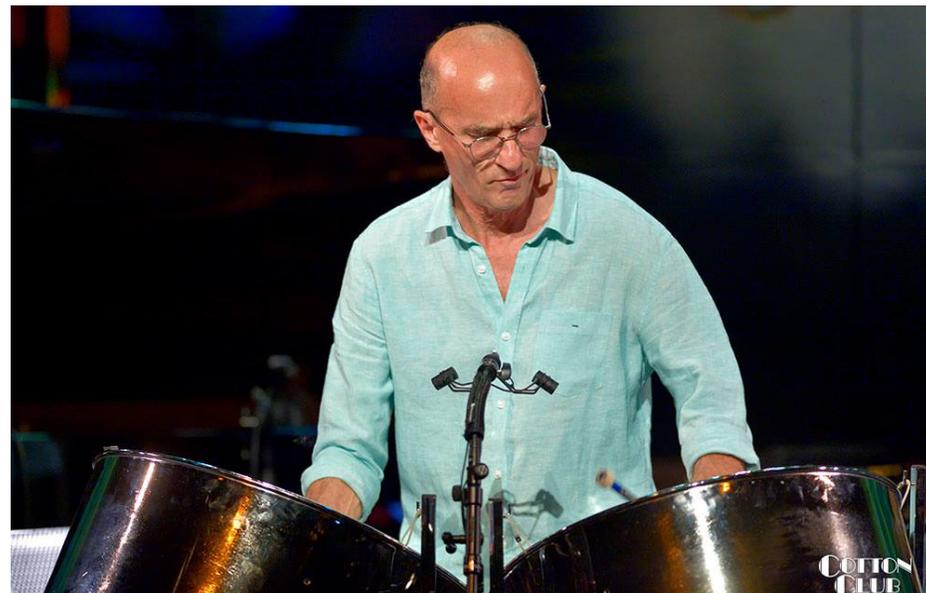
The first thing to remember is that it all starts with your sound. A beautiful well-tuned pan played with control and sensitivity is the first step toward getting a good sound in the mix. You need to think about the dynamic range of the music, what's going on around you, and how you want to sound in the mix. Playing louder can often have the effect of making you LESS prominent in the mix because the pan sounds thinner and brighter when played hard. Think about the end result – the sound that people will hear after it passes through all the equipment.

I get the best results in the studio by using a matched pair of tube or condenser microphones, with small diaphragms and cardioid patterns (I'll explain those terms below). My favorite mics are the Neumann KM 54 and KM 64 tube mics, and condenser mics like the Neumann KM 84 and KM 184, DPA 4011. The AKG 451 and Rode NT5 are less expensive and sound good – I carry a pair of 451's when I'm traveling and have recorded hundreds of tracks on albums with them.

On stage I'll ask if they have condenser mics like Neumann KM 184's or KM 84's, DPA 4011 or 4099, AKG 451, Rode NT5, Shure SM 81, Shure SM 98 (no tube mics). If the conditions are difficult (it's windy, or the sound is loud on stage) I might ask the engineer to just put up a pair of Shure SM 57's. Everybody has them, they have a narrow pattern, can handle wind better than condensers, and they sound OK.

When I'm in the studio recording a double second I'll hang a stereo pair in the middle area of the pans at about chest height or a little lower and point them outwards, towards the center of each pan. It's worth taking the time to listen to the difference in sound when you place the mics higher or lower. Low frequencies increase as you move in. On live gigs you'll normally need to move them in closer.

One thing I learned on scoring sessions was that two-channel stereo isn't the only kind of stereo. Two channel stereo has what's called a 'phantom center,' which means that if you send the same exact signal to the left and right channels, the sound will appear to come from a point halfway between the two speakers. This is how lead vocals, bass,



An example of Andy Narell's microphone positioning when playing live.

kick, and snare are usually treated and why they appear to be in the center of the mix. I noticed that engineers at Los Angeles scoring sessions routinely put an actual speaker in the center and mixed to 3 channel stereo, because that's how the speakers in movie theaters were set up. The 3 channel stereo with an actual center track gave me the idea of trying to record the pans that way. I put a third mic right in the center between the usual stereo pair and the result is a smoother, more precise stereo image. It also has the effect of adding warmth without using EQ. A lot depends on the mic choice for that center mic as well. I usually use a similar sounding mic to the stereo pair and mix the center mic about 5 db lower than the stereo pair.

Amplification on live gigs poses a whole set of challenges different from the studio. A lot of the problems on stage have to do with leakage, and it's important to understand how that works in a practical situation.

'Leakage' refers to everything else that the microphone hears that is NOT the instrument it's pointed at. An SM 57 pointed at a guitar amplifier will have virtually none, whereas instruments like steel pans have major leakage issues. Now imagine that the engineer is trying to get the pan up front in the mix. When he/she brings up the fader to turn it up, a whole bunch of other stuff that is not the pan comes up as well. The more they bring up the pan the more the overall mix gets washed out by the sound of other instruments leaking into the pan mics. The problem is magnified on stage, where everyone is using monitors. When you put the sound of the pan in the monitors so that everybody on stage can hear it, a whole bunch of leakage comes back through the monitors along with the pan, which cycles back through the mics, and eventually makes everybody sound bad, and the whole band is miserable because the sound on stage is so bad and everything is feeding back. Another term here—"feedback" is a loop created by sound circulating from mics to speakers and back to the mics. The result is

normally either a high frequency screech or a low frequency hum.

The problems usually start with loud drummers, bass and guitar amp levels, and monitor levels of keyboards. Once those are loud, everybody has to start pushing up their monitor levels to hear themselves and each other, and the situation can easily escalate until it's out of control. The solution to this problem is to keep the stage volume under control and the monitor levels as low as possible. I avoid playing in situations where the band plays habitually loud, but often I have to appeal to the band. I try to be diplomatic. I apologize for being the problem, explain that my mics are wide open and that everything on stage is leaking into them, causing the whole cycle of misery that everyone will inevitably experience, and that the more their instruments leak into my mics, the worse they're all going to sound, both in the monitors and out front. Obviously, it's a lot easier to have this conversation when you're the leader of the band, but you shouldn't be afraid to bring it up in other situations. Most often the rest of the band doesn't understand the problem and they just blame the monitor engineer for all the problems they're dealing with onstage. If you want everybody on your side, it helps to own up to being the problem.

Being flexible about mic choices also helps. Some companies have hyper cardioid versions of their mics, like the beta versions of the Shure mics (SM 57, 58, 98). These should have a little less leakage. Be prepared to move the mics in as close as possible, but make sure they're still pointed towards the center of the pans, and that you don't hit them when you're playing. Stay away from amplifiers and keep your own monitor levels as low as possible.

Explanation of Terms

Earlier I said a 'matched pair of tube or condenser microphones, with small diaphragms and cardioid patterns' - A 'matched pair' refers to two of the same microphone. 'Cardioid' refers to how the mic responds to sound coming at it from different directions. Cardioid mics have narrow patterns. If you want to point the mic at an instrument and have it focused on the sound of that instrument, you will mostly use cardioid mics.

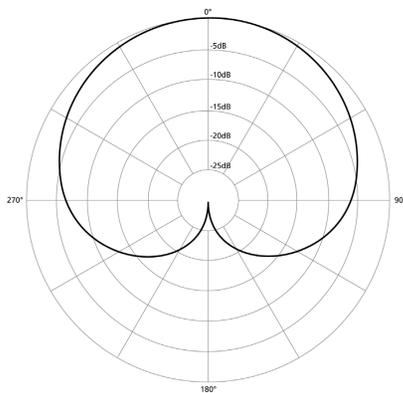
Omnidirectional mics have the purest sound quality, but they have a 360-degree pattern, and will not focus on the instrument they're pointed at, so they have limited use in the studios, and virtually none on stage. They are often used to capture the sound of a room—like the sound of an orchestra in a large hall, or drums in a large studio—which is added to the sound of the close-up mics.



Stereo Pair of AKG C451s



Neumann KM64 Microphone



Cardioid Pattern

Mics are also classified by their internal elements—dynamic, ribbon, condenser (transistor), and tube mics all have different qualities. The Shure SM 57's and SM 58's you see all the time on stages are dynamic mics. One of the reasons they're so ubiquitous is that they can stand up to rough treatment. Condenser mics are more susceptible to injury and their diaphragms can't absorb as much sound pressure as dynamic mics. Most sound companies will carry a number of these to use on piano, percussion, drum overheads...Tube mics are even more vulnerable to injury and they need their own dedicated power supplies (condenser mics get their power from the 48V output of the mixer/console, dynamic and ribbon mics don't need outside power). They normally never leave the studio.

The diaphragm is a membrane sensitive to sound pressure and is the key component in converting acoustic energy into electrical energy. Examples of large diaphragm mics that you'll commonly see are AKG 414, Neumann U87, Neumann TLM series. The Neumann KM 184 and KM 84, AKG 451, Shure SM 81, etc. are small diaphragm mics.

Many of these mics had tube ancestors which were the dominant studio mics in the 40's and 50's. If you look at photos of Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, and Frank Sinatra in the recording studios, you'll see large diaphragm tube mics like the Neumann U47. The Neumann M49 and AKG C12 and C12A are other classic mics of the period. Examples of small diaphragm tube mics are Neumann KM 54 and KM 64. These were all replaced by transistor mics in the 60's and 70's—mics that were quieter and were much more durable and easier to maintain. However, in the 80's engineers and musicians started noticing that they often preferred the sound of the old tube mics, and a vintage mic market began to flourish. There was a limited quantity of those mics to go around, so as demand went up the prices started going up like crazy, and the microphone companies responded by producing new, quieter versions of their old tube mics, like the Neumann 149 (a remake of the U49) and AKG C12 VR. There are also companies like Rode who produce lower priced but beautiful sounding tube mics.

As I said above, my favorite microphones for recording the pans are the Neumann KM 54 and KM 64 (tube microphones made in the 1950's and 60's). As I researched buying a pair for myself, I learned some interesting history about the mics. The KM 54 came out in 1953 and it has a tube which is of legendary sound quality, and a nickel diaphragm. Nobody knows how to make nickel diaphragms anymore, so when the diaphragms wear out, they are replaced by mylar diaphragms, which sound different and require a different type of capsule to get the best sound. So, there's a very small number of actual working KM 54's in existence, and if the diaphragm gives out the mic can't be

restored to its original sound. Neumann responded to the problem by changing the shape of the capsule and producing the KM 64, which is essentially a KM 54 mic with a newly designed capsule and a mylar diaphragm. The KM 64 was replaced by the KM 84 - a condenser mic with the same capsule. Today's version of that mic is the KM 184.

I found a pair of KM 64's for sale in the 80's and have been using them ever since on my records. They also sound great for drum overheads, acoustic bass, acoustic guitars, congas and percussion—almost anything I need a stereo pair for. (For vocals and horns I prefer large diaphragm mics). One of the things I learned from watching how they record orchestras in Los Angeles is that the engineers were using small diaphragm mics on almost everything in the percussion section, so recording pans that way was logical to them, and I had come to same conclusion doing overdubs one at a time in smaller studios.

A Word About Phase

Anybody setting up mics should have a basic understanding of phase relationships. Whenever you have 2 mics pointed at the same instrument you need to consider the phase relationship of those two mics. If you put 2 mics in the same place and point them in the same direction, the minute difference in their distance to the sound source will create phase cancellation. The solution to this is to point the mics in different directions. When you have two mics together but pointed 90 degrees apart from each other it's called X/Y in engineering language. It's not necessary to go that far though.

You can learn a lot about phase by doing a couple of experiments at home. The first thing you can do is reverse the wires on the back of one of your speakers, then notice how disorienting it is to sit in front of the speakers and listen to the music. It makes me physically uncomfortable, and the placement of instruments is unclear. Another thing you can do is to take a bass or kick drum track and duplicate it, then flip the phase switch on one of the tracks. The low frequencies will be lacking, and the volume will appear to go down instead of up when you add the two tracks together. That's also an easy way to check tracks that you suspect are somewhat out of phase. Put them both in the center, turn one of them off and on, and compare the sound. If they're in phase, the instrument will be louder when both tracks are on. Out of phase will result in a drop in volume and low frequencies when you turn the second track on. ■

HUGH BORDE & THE TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND

Ray Funk & Andrew Martin



Until his passing in February of 2020, **Hugh Borde**—a legendary steelpan pioneer—was best known in Trinidad for his 35 years of judging Panorama competitions. Despite living in the United States for over 50 years, Borde returned home to Trinidad every year for Carnival. Borde relished the opportunity to see old friends, judge Panorama steelband competitions, and host an annual Carnival Thursday lime in Belmont known for celebrating steelpan pioneers. But few people realize Borde's key role in leading one of Trinidad's great steelbands, Trinidad Tripoli. Much of the band's history was relegated to time until March of 2003, when National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, aired a piece titled *Liberace & the Trinidad Tripoli Steelband* which described the tale of how oil and one of America's most flamboyant entertainers helped millions of Americans hear one of Trinidad's hottest steelbands during late 1960s and early 1970s. The story of Hugh Borde and Tripoli steel orchestra, like any of the great Trinidadian panman and steelbands, is a fascinating tome full of twists and turns.



(Right) Tripoli's *The Surrender of Japan on the Western Main Road* in St. James, 1961.

(Left) Tripoli Bugle

St. James and Tripoli

Hugh Borde grew up in the St. James neighborhood of Port of Spain. Borde's mother was a musician and organist at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church and was one of the first to get a piano in St. James. He started learning piano at the age of five and unlike many pannists of his era was trained in western art music theory and harmony by his mother. "He was musically literate and could translate the classics using sheet music," noted Borde's longtime friend Cliff Alexis who would later add, "this was one of the things that made him special—he could run in both worlds of panman and other musicians." His musical training notwithstanding, however, it was steelpan that interested Hugh and his older brother Carl the most and the pair spent most of their available time in the panyard. Borde's parents were against any member of the family getting involved with steelband. Carlton "Sonny" Roach was an early steelpan influence, and Borde notes, "Sonny came by my window of my house. He would listen to me on the piano and try to bang out the right notes." Borde's mother discouraged the whole affair by tossing a bucket of water on Roach, "She just wet him down!" he recalled. Borde's father, too, discouraged the boys from playing steelpan, even once going on a rampage with a hatchet

and destroying all the steelpans rehearsing in their panyard. But Hugh and Carl were smitten with the instrument and devoted their lives to steelpan.

The St. James area had only a few steelbands in the 1940s and 1950s, and Borde started off in Hell's Kitchen, a group of youngsters that included future steelband legend Sterling Bettancourt. It was here that Borde received his nickname "Boboy". He then played with a band called Five Graves to Cairo before he joined a band that was initially called Grow More Food. Then, like many steelbands of the time, the band took on a name from a movie title, *Shores of Tripoli* (1942) taken from the US Marines hymn, "From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli". Joseph "Crick" Christopher was the band's leader. Inspired by the military theme, Crick demanded that he be addressed as "Admiral," saluted by band members, and Tripoli played the Marines hymn for Carnival parades.

The military theme was carried into the mas band that Tripoli brought out every Carnival. "We won for military mas nine years straight," Borde recalled. Tripoli kept to sailor

mas during Crick's leadership and carried on the tradition when Borde was appointed leader of the band in 1951. Band member Clyde Yorke further notes that Tripoli always played American sailors, never British sailors. The band's panyard moved around during these early years but eventually settled on the corner of Ethel Street and Mucurapo Road in St. James. Tripoli performed in the famous first island-wide steelband competition held in September of 1946 at Mucurapo Boxing Stadium, and the band was successful in competitions during this time period, garnering strong public support across the island in the 1940s and 1950s. Tripoli also played regular spots on Radio Trinidad and was well supported during Carnival by massive mas bands year after year.

Crick left the band in 1951 and Borde became its captain and would continue as its leader the rest of his life. Steelband was Borde's passion, but initially not his vocation. After attempting to become a horse racing jockey, Borde went to work as an accounting clerk for the Ministry of Works, a job he held until the late 1960s. Tripoli was his primary focus, however, and Borde's frequent travels finally caused him to quit his day job to focus exclusively on steelpan.

“He had a keen ear for melody, which made him such a great arranger.”

Borde was a devotee of traditional calypso, and classics from the likes of Sparrow and Kitchener were a staple of the band's repertoire. “He had a keen ear for melody, which made him such a great arranger,” notes Hollis Liverpool. In the early 1950s when Borde first took over Tripoli, the stage side often backed calypsonians like Tiger, Skipper, and Panther in nightclubs such as Dirty Jim's Swizzle Club on South Quay. Tripoli also backed limbo acts including Stretch Cox. Tripoli was also on the forefront of innovations to steelpan playing, notes Kim Johnson, who indicates that, “as early as 1956 [Tripoli took] the first amplified pans on the road.”

By the early 1960s, Tripoli was coming into its own under Borde's leadership as one of the leading steelbands in Trinidad. When Panorama and the steelband festivals began in the early 1960s, Tripoli was in the top ranks of both competitions. Junior Pouchet of Silver Stars who, though never a member of Tripoli, was a close friend of Borde and arranged for Tripoli. In 1964 and 1965, Tripoli won acclaim during the Steelband Festival for his arrangements of “The Man I Love” and “Midnight in Moscow”. Winning the Prime Minister's trophy at the Steelband Festival earned Tripoli the privilege

to be one of the three steel bands selected to perform for Queen Elizabeth during a visit in 1966.

Another force in the rise of Tripoli was Father John Sewell, an Anglican minister who came to Trinidad in 1963 and was based at various churches throughout the country. Sewell was an instant supporter of steelbands and, shortly after arriving to Trinidad, began inviting steelbands such as Tripoli into the church for concerts. Sewell also arranged classical pieces for the steelband and Tripoli performed a classical concert featuring the late Pat Bishop singing classical music backed by Tripoli in a production called *Carols and Classics in Steel* in Queen's Hall. According to Bishop, “I was to be the singer and Esso Tripoli, led by Hugh Borde, was the band...I had no mic and the band did not drown the voice and so one more small piece of pan history was made.” Sewell's work with Tripoli caught the eye of one of Trinidad's leading classical composers, the late Vernon Evans, and the pair collaborated on several classical music projects. The first was “Dengue—Theme and Variations for Steelband” and the second “Ballet to Steel,” the first time a ballet was accompanied by a steelband. In late years, Sewell took a leave of absence from the Anglican Church and became the Tripoli's arranger and conductor for classical material, accompanying the band on tours to the United States. Courtney Leiba notes, “Father Sewell never preached religion to us but was excited by the musical ability of the steelband.”

Because of its longevity, Tripoli used a number of tuners over the years. The most notable tuner of the band's early years was Alan Gervais who start tuning for Tripoli in 1964. Borde and Critchlow were excited to have Gervais to join the band, saying he was “Dynamite.” Gervais pioneered many tuning methods, giving Tripoli a unique sound. He also performed with the band in the Engine Room when they went on tour to the United States and Canada. Borde was enthusiastic in his praise, “When [Gervais] tuned a pan it would be so good, you could play them with broomsticks and they wouldn't go out of tune. He was way ahead of his time.”

Esso Oil Sponsorship

Throughout the ongoing history of Trinidadian steelbands one of the most important ingredients for a steelband's success, especially from the 1950s on, was sponsorship. While sponsorship of steelbands is now quite common, it was not in the 1950s. The oil industry in Trinidad was a leader in this area with Shell sponsoring Invaders and other companies such as Texaco and Amoco sponsoring steelbands. Esso was one of the first companies to sponsor steelbands when they sponsored the Woodbrook steelband Dixie Stars on a 1954 tour to Canada. The band, led by Hugh Borde's brother Carl, eventually moved to Bermuda where they stayed and worked for decades as the Esso Steel Band. Sponsorship



Tripoli at the Botanical Gardens, winners of the 1965 Independence Festival.

enabled bands to get needed publicity and it gave essential financial support for equipment, panyards, arrangers, and tuners.

Esso began sponsoring Tripoli shortly after the band won the Prime Minister Trophy in 1964. Esso remained the band's major sponsor until 1967. Both Shell Oil and Elna Sewing Machine had both previously sponsored Tripoli for brief periods, however, their support was nothing compared to the ongoing relationship that developed with Esso. Fred Lam worked in marketing for Esso in the 1960s and chose Tripoli for sponsorship after interviewing a number of steelbands. He became a prime force in promoting Tripoli on tours in the Caribbean, United States, and Canada. Tours involved various versions of Tripoli ranging from Borde solo to the full band. Esso often sent Borde and Critchlow on trips throughout the Caribbean to teach and build steelpans for local steelbands.

The National Steelband

Because of his work with Tripoli, Borde's individual steelpan notoriety rose throughout the early 1960s and he was selected to be a member of the first two editions of the National Steel Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago (NSOTT). In 1964, this all-star band comprised of representatives from Trinidad and Tobago's leading steelbands was formed for a tour to Mackinac Island in Michigan for an international conference sponsored by the Moral Re-Armament Association (MRA). The NSOTT was a huge success and in addition to the conference the band toured across the United States from West Virginia to New Mexico. The MRA released a short film of the band called *Steelband Varietie*.

In 1965, Borde was again chosen to be a member of the NSOTT and this time it was for a tour to the United Kingdom to perform at the Commonwealth Arts Festival. The band, along with a theatrical company, were again popular with The Trinidad Daily Mirror proclaiming, “The Steel Orchestra

“The Steel Orchestra was the greatest thing that ever happened to music in recent years. This was the view of music experts in England!”

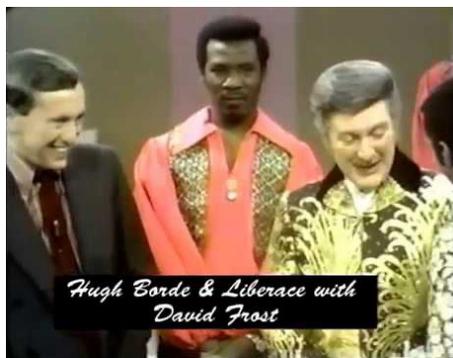
was the greatest thing that ever happened to music in recent years. This was the view of music experts in England!" The NSOTT performed at Royal Albert Hall with the Queen in attendance and toured Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. These international tours with the NSOTT had a profound effect on Borde. He became focused on touring internationally with Tripoli and he would not have to wait long as his chance came in 1967.

Montreal's Expo 67

The 1967 World's Fair (AKA Expo 67) was held in Montreal and Trinidad made a major commitment to celebrate five years of Independence by creating a pavilion at Expo 67 with daily Carnival events with dancers, musicians and a resident steelband—to be known as the Exponians. The Trinidad pavilion also hosted other touring Trinidadian steelbands including Tripoli. Expo 67 was one of the most successful World's Fair ever held with daily attendance in the hundreds of thousands, assuring vast exposure for the participating steelbands.

Before arriving in Montreal, Esso marketer Frank Lam with Rock Johnson arranged for Tripoli to go on an extended summer tour up the Caribbean, on to the United States and Canada. Tripoli left Trinidad on the S. S. Federal Maple and sailed north, performing at nearly every island in the Caribbean including Narrows Island, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua, St. Lucia, and Jamaica. Then Tripoli flew from Kingston to New York City where they performed at Lincoln Center, Central Park, Rockefeller Plaza, and the Aztec Garden at the Pan-American Union, before catching a bus and heading down to Washington, D.C. to perform for another week. Tripoli then flew to Canada and spent one month in Montreal, two weeks in Toronto, and two short stops in Ottawa.

The band's three weeks of performances at the Trinidad and Tobago/Grenada Pavilion at Expo 67 was the highlight of the trip. These performances were in front of crowds numbering in the thousands and it gave the band incredible exposure. Tripoli performed on a small circular stage that was positioned in a moot. This outdoor stage was precarious to say the least and their "scratcher man" Courtney Lieba fell into the water while performing, much to the amusement of the crowd. As Courtney Lieba recalled, "Being a true showman I swam backwards while playing the guiro. This turned out to be a crowd pleaser and Expo 67 officials asked me to perform this feat everyday thereafter." For most members of Tripoli, the summer 1967 tour to the United States and Canada was incredibly exciting, and Michael Kernahan was particularly struck by the overwhelming audience reception, "People were still not used to the instrument and they got so excited night after night, it was overwhelming!"



(Top) Hugh Borde, (Bottom) David Frost, Hugh Borde, and Liberace. (Next Page) Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band

In addition to their performances at Expo 67, Tripoli was active playing throughout Montreal, including the Place Ville Marie and galas at the Museum of Fine Arts. In Toronto, Tripoli had the distinction of playing on the road for one of the first Caribana celebrations.



“Liberace often commented that Tripoli was ‘the first touring act I’ve seen receive a standing ovation at every performance.’ ”

Liberace

With Carnival season upon them in 1968, Tripoli performed for Panorama for the last time, featuring Lord Kitchener's "Miss Tourist" arranged by Tommy Crichlow. But Crichlow did not come with the band when Tripoli returned to North America on another summer tour of the United States and Canada in 1968. The festival site of Expo 67 in Montreal became a summer attraction known as Man and his World and Tripoli returned to perform at the festival as well as record several studio albums for Arc Records in Toronto.

Fate struck as a result of their work in Canada as Tripoli caught the attention of famed pianist and entertainer Liberace. The flamboyant showman was fascinated by the steelpan's exotic sound and visual appeal. Courtney Leiba

recalls that Liberace's personal manager Seymour Heller first thought there was some type of gadget under the instruments making the sound. Liberace and his manager start arranging to add Tripoli to his traveling show.

In 1968, the band performed in Montreal and Toronto before embarking on a tour of colleges in New York State. Tripoli purchased a bus and drove to Los Angeles arriving a few weeks before Christmas. Early in 1969, Tripoli performed with Liberace at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. The show was a success and so began the partnership between Liberace and Tripoli, lasting over two years of tours and traveling 46 states. Tripoli was based in Los Angeles during

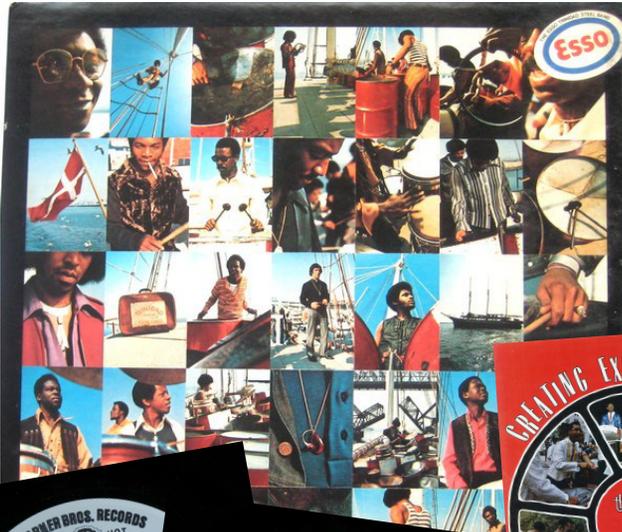
this time and played at many of the largest concert halls and nightclubs in the United States, with extended residencies in Las Vegas in between tours. They were a large steelband during this time, traveling with over 20 players.

Liberace gleefully introduced Tripoli as an opening act to his show, and would later perform two numbers with Tripoli, "Alley Cat" and "Twelfth Street Rag" as part of his own portion of the show. Liberace often commented that Tripoli was "the first touring act I've seen receive a standing ovation at every performance." Tripoli also performed on almost every major television variety show during this time, including the Ed Sullivan Show, Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, the Mike Douglas Show, the David Frost Show and the Merv Griffin Show, often with Liberace. For many North Americans, the Tripoli/Liberace tours and television appearances were their first major exposure to steelbands and steelpan. Borde stood out especially on television as he, like Liberace, was known as an impeccably sharp dresser.

Warner Brothers and Van Dyke Parks

While Liberace brought Tripoli to the attention of the international public, the band also caught the attention of Warner Brothers recording artist and producer Van Dyke Parks who had previously worked with Trinidadian-now Los Angeles-based pianist Andrew "Pan" De La Bastide. A wunderkind song writer, lyricist, arranger and producer, Parks was best known for his work with Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, co-writing several classic songs including "Heroes And Villains" as well as working with artists such as Ry Cooder and Randy Newman on some of their first recordings. Parks signed to Warner Brothers both as a recording artist and producer, and was already a fan of calypso, steelband, and Trinidad before meeting Tripoli. Borde was still under contract to Arc Records in Canada and he and the band decided to part ways. They changed their name to Esso Steel Band and Kenrick Headley became the head of the band.

Parks produced an exciting album titled Esso Trinidad Steel Band (1971) with arrangements by Kenrick Headley and Father Sewell. Parks mixed the sound of the band with several other instruments for an eclectic mix of styles and genres, including the Kinks hit "Ape Man," Simon and Garfunkel's "Cecilia," and the Jackson 5's "I Want You Back." Parks considers Tripoli, "the greatest group I've ever had the privilege to produce."



Warner Bros. 1971 release of "Esso Trinidad Steel Band" and the realedt singles

Despite his enthusiasm, Parks had a hard time convincing Warner Brothers to record the album as it did not project significant sales. Parks even went so far as to produce a four-page set of note titled The Guardian of Stateside Steelbands rich with photos and odd pieces of information on Tripoli. Warner Brothers balked at the costly liner notes—which were never printed—but agreed to the album which rewarded the label with a 1971 Grammy nomination for best ethnic or traditional recording—the first in history for a steelband and Warner released three singles from the album.

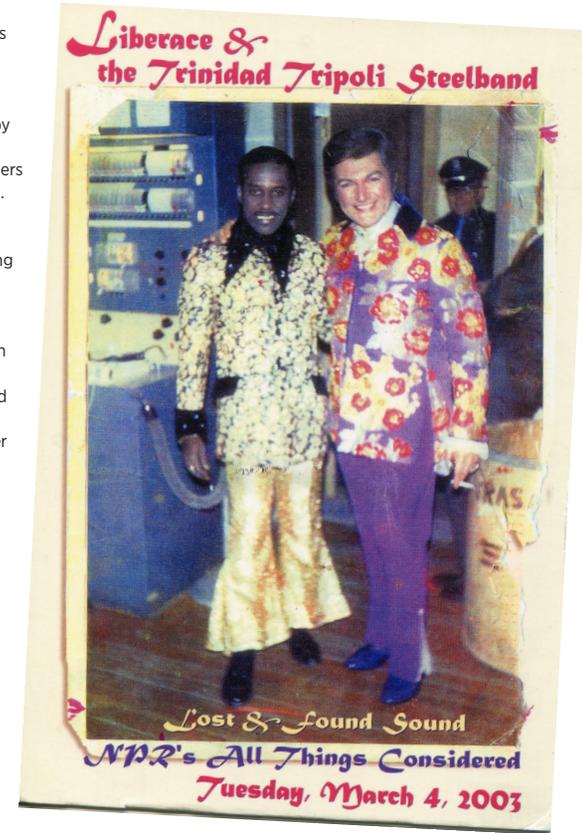
In addition to producing Tripoli's album, Parks featured the band's tracks on his own album, Discover America (1972). Despite its title, the album has more to do with Trinidad than the United States, and features classic calypsos by Kitchener, Sparrow, and Roaring Lion. Tripoli would also perform on another Warner Brothers recording, John Sebastian's *Four of Us* album. Because of their work with Parks, the band garnered interest from the rock world and in 1971 the band performed concerts with leading rock artists the likes of the Allman Brothers Band, Hot Tuna, Ry Cooder, Little Feat, and others. British folk-rock legend Richard Thompson saw the band in 1971 and recalled, "Esso Steel Band [was] a big sponsored steel band that did "River Deep, Mountain High" and Bach and stuff."

The Liberace/Parks period found Tripoli reaching a large new audience of young listeners; yet, the momentum did not last. A tour bus crash in Philadelphia in late 1971 injured several band members. Van

Dyke Parks produced a documentary of Tripoli's tour, though it was not released until several decades later. Meanwhile, the H-1 visas of all the Tripoli members were expiring and in March 1972, the California based members of the band returned to Trinidad and this band dissolved. The St. James Tripolians, a single pan band, grew out of some returning members.

Tripoli—The Borde Family Band

Despite his lack of involvement with the Esso/Van Dyke Parks recording sessions, Borde put together a new band from other Trinidadian steelpan players already in the United States. Tripoli rose from the ashes and the new membership sported an impressive pedigree, including players from Hylanders, Desperados, Casablanca, All Stars, and many others. Players such as Kim Loy Wong, Lennox Phillips, Mike Enoch, Sonny Applewhite, Nick Gilford, Donald Baptiste, Wilton DuBois and Jim Boyce joined Borde as Tripoli members. With Borde at the helm, there was attention to



Advertisement for NPR's All Things Considered featuring Hugh Borde, Liberace, and the Trinidad Tripoli Steelband

appearance, presentation, and professionalism, and venues included, for example, a week of appearance at the Louisiana State Fair in Shreveport with the Ice Capades.

Jim Boyce became the primary arranger for the new Tripoli, putting an emphasis on classical material. The band adapted to the tastes of times and one of the band's most popular numbers on college campuses at the time was an innovative arrangement of the theme from the movie Shaft. Patrick

Arnold and Ellie Mannette made and tuned steelpan for the band during this time.

Following a performance at the Las Vegas Sahara during the 1972 Easter Seal Telethon, popular Italian tenor Sergio Franchi convinced Borde and the new Tripoli to join him on an extended tour performing at many of the same venues as the old Tripoli had with Liberace. Tripoli was once again a successful touring act, but by the end of 1974, an exhausted Borde left the band in North Carolina and returned to Trinidad, and once again this version of the band continued without him. A national gas shortage, however, stranded the band in Charlotte and Tripoli was so well received in North Carolina that, after returning to the United States, Borde decided to settle there and the band was based in Charlotte for several years.

In 1977, Borde relocated to Michigan where he would permanently settle and began to notice “[m]y children started playing and I saw how good they were.” Borde made the decision to remake Tripoli once again as a family steelband. Mike Kernahan, who had moved to Ann Arbor and succeeded Alan Gervais as the band’s tuner, then moved to Florida and formed a new band called the Twenty First Century Steelband in Miami. He continues to be an important builder/tuner traveling and tuning throughout the United States.

Borde was a devotee of traditional calypso and classics from Sparrow and Kitchener were a continuous staple of the band’s repertoire. When Chalkdust, Dr. Hollis Liverpool, was living in Michigan working on his doctorate, they would often perform together. Borde noted, “Chalkie actually would play guitar pan with the band!” Hugh’s daughter Bianca Borde often sang with the band. She appeared in Trinidad at the Professional calypso tent in 1977 as the Buzzing Bee. At the time, she was the youngest female calypso singer to reach to the Monarch finals and came in second in the Calypso Queen competition behind Calypso Rose.

Tripoli also adapted to changing times and repertoires, and the band has continued to work with former band members from Tripoli and Twenty-First Century Steelband as well as the late Cliff Alexis to shape and evolve. Hugh’s son Emile took a key role in reshaping the Tripoli sound. “I wanted to make the band smaller and update its sound. To be truthful, I’d rather play Top 40 songs than Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, which is what the old band used to play. My father really resisted the change at first, but the whole band was family, and everybody knew that we’d hit around a good combination.” In later years, Hugh Borde’s ill health prevented his participation while Emile Borde has continued as a steelpan soloist and bandleader with a band called Tropical Connections and has completed a documentary film on his

father, [The Pan Story](#).

Tripoli recorded a series of albums during the 1990s and 2000s, and continued to tour on college campuses and state fairs among other venues. By 2008, they had appeared on 325 college and universities. Over the years, Tripoli has performed with countless artistic icons, including Barbara Mandrell, Aretha Franklin, Harry Belafonte, Chubby Checker, Sugar Minot, Jaco Pastorius, Charlie Pride, Max Roach, and Bob Marley’s Wailers among others.

Meanwhile, various events have brought attention to the band’s long history. In 2003, National Public Radio’s All Things Considered, aired a piece titled Liberace & the Trinidad Tripoli Steelband an extended audio piece by the [Kitchen Sisters](#).

Davia Nelson of the Kitchen Sisters became fascinated with hearing Emile Borde play at a private party at her sister’s home and wanted to learn more about the history of the instrument and the band. In 2009, Van Dyke Parks reissued the 1971 Warner Brothers album he produced on his Banastan Records with a 28-minute documentary of Tripoli traveling on the road across America in the 1970s that not been previously released.

Trinidad Tripoli, Pan Pioneers across the Globe

Since the 1940s, the Trinidad Tripoli steelband in its many facets and configurations was a pioneering steelband in Trinidad and North America. Many former Tripoli steelband members have gone on to celebrated careers in steelpan. Courtney Leiba immigrated to Australia and formed the Calypso Pan-Tas-Tic Steelband and received a Certificate of Appreciation for promoting steelbands in Australia from Panz (Steelband Association of Australia and New Zealand), Casper Duranmt was master of the quads for Exodus Steel Orchestra, Harold Headley who recently retired from teaching steelpan at the Creative Arts Centre at UWI (he and his brother Kenrick together have been Panorama arrangers for Exodus and other bands), Jim Boyce and Donald Baptiste led steelbands in Charlotte, North Carolina, Tommy Crichlow leads the Pan Masters in Toronto, tunes for Canadian steelbands, and is a long time judge for Panorama in Trinidad.

The leader of Tripoli for over fifty years, Hugh Borde received several awards for his service to steelpan throughout his life. He was awarded the Hummingbird Bronze Medal by Trinidad and Tobago in 1971, awarded the Gold Medal of Merit by United States President Ronald Regan for his contribution in steelband in 1986, and he received a Sunshine award in 1995. He ranks with Ellie Mannette and Cliff Alexis among the most important Trinidad pioneers of the steel-

band world in North America and gave it extensive exposure across the country as the leader of Trinidad Tripoli. ■

Special thanks to the late Hugh Borde, Emile Borde, Clyde Borde, Kenrick Headley, Harold Headley, Michael Kernahan, Tommy Crichlow, Courtney Leiba, Jim Boyce, Casper Durant, Wilton DeBois, Davia Nelson, Mason Damrau and Kim Johnson

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ray Funk is a retired Alaskan judge and a Fulbright scholar who is passionately devoted to calypso, pan, and mas.



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PANDEMIC ERA STEELPAN: CONTINUING TO DEVELOP OUR CRAFT IN A TIME OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

DR. JOSEPH GALVIN



Dr. Joseph Galvin is currently a visiting lecturer at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music in the percussion and jazz departments as well as the JSOM Latin American Music Center. He directs several ensembles in both popular and folkloric Latin music genres and teaches applied lessons in percussion and steelpan. You can hear Galvin's playing on two Grammy nominated albums: *The Wayne Wallace Quintet's Intercambio* and *Michael Spiro and Wayne Wallace's Canto América*. His most recent album, released in 2017, is a collaboration with Michael Spiro entitled *BÁKINI - En el Nuevo Mundo*.

Historically, steelpan has embodied the definition of adaptability. The instrument would not exist if not for the ingenuity of the first pan pioneers who sought a way through adversity to express their musical voices. Now, once again, the steelpan and those who love it find themselves with a new hurdle to overcome. I do not intend to inaccurately equate years of oppression and struggle in Trinidad and Tobago with a few months of sheltering in place, but rather I make this comparison to remind all of us that a steadfast sensibility forms the core of our collective artform. As the pandemic sets in worldwide, we can call on this adaptability that is the soul of steelpan and move forward in our new reality.

If your situation is similar to mine, you now find yourself at home with a good deal of excess time on your hands. On the positive side, we suddenly have ample practice time; I am personally tackling a huge backlog of material, piled up over several years from juggling a hectic academic schedule. However, the counterpoint to finally making it into the woodshed everyday sits at odds with the sinking feeling of losing our steelbands right at the onset of the spring concert season. The band at Indiana University had a mere month to go before our end-of-year concert. Many universities across the country had similar schedules, with middle school and high school band concerts usually slated only a few weeks later. The decision to shutter schools happened so quickly that I barely had time to pull my personal instruments out of the rehearsal locker-room before the campus went into lockdown. I found

myself standing in an empty practice space collecting my pans and wondering what just happened, and more importantly, when would I get to see my band again.

Fortunately, we find ourselves situated in a technological era rife with incredible tools at our disposal to handle social distancing. The availability and reasonable cost of a wide array of audio and video recording software and mobile applications that focus on digital interactivity bring our steelbands back to us via our computer screens. These advancements also let us adapt our own playing and allow us to reach an audience from our own living rooms in ways unimaginable even one decade ago. Envision the current predicament without the internet, video conference calls, or any number of the utilities we have come to rely on to get us through this crisis! In an odd way, as educators we can be thankful COVID-19 hit in 2020 and not in 1995.

The Woodshed Goes Global

I personally decided to try to make the most of this time at home to record some repertoire I had put off for quite a while, as well as delve into concepts that I had only previously dabbled with regarding solo playing. Platforms like YouTube and Facebook Live have become quite popular among musicians, regardless of their instrument, for broadcasting new forms of concerts to virtual audiences. I opted for YouTube as my preferred medium, but countless variations of these remote performances are occurring on an international scale. These virtual platforms bring the audience into our own homes and private rehearsal spaces, cultivating a new sense of musical intimacy with them. Of course, there are issues to address with this model, with how to successfully monetize online concerts being a primary concern, but that is a topic far beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I will focus on how I have engaged with these platforms to continue developing my craft while being confined at home.

My first experimentation was with live playing on extended ranges for a solo player, without using any looping technology and trying to avoid using backing tracks. Pannists have looked into extending the range of a single instrument before: Liam Teague playing classical violin concerti,

“I found myself standing in an empty practice space collecting my pans and wondering what just happened, and more importantly, when would I get to see my band again.”

or Hueloy Yip Young combining a wide range of pans and e-pans, or Dr. Jeanine Remy using cello pans along with a lead instrument are some notable instances. Andy Narell may have been one of the first pannists to extend his range by combining a tenor pan with double seconds, eventually leading Ellie Mannette to create the quaduet setup for a double seconds player, lowering the range of Mannette style double seconds by a sixth. Originally a unique extension, quaduets have become so popular and widespread as to be considered a standard instrument.

Spurred on by the desire to play Bach on steelpan without having to arrange the music to fit a single pan, I began to try various combinations of instruments (which I had luckily managed to get off campus just in time). Finding mallets that would accommodate the large range of notes was the main issue I came across when trying to combine pans. Through trial and error, I eventually discovered that using 4-mallet technique and replacing one lead mallet with a bass mallet in my left hand gave me the best versatility and comfort.¹ Eventually I took it a step further and created a reversible mallet with both tenor and bass mallet tips, which allowed me to maintain 4-mallet capabilities on my lead pan while plucking out bass notes on a set of tenor-bass with

¹ For a detailed description of various 4-mallet grips and stick options pannists use, please refer to the previous NSSBE article found here: <https://weteachpan.org/fundamental/intro-to-four-mallet-tenor-pan-technique/>

the back end of the stick—a truly strange creation made possible by quarantine.²



(Top) Tenor mallet with reversed bass tip, (Bottom) Left hand reverse mallet grip

“However, instead of only pining for that time, I encourage us all to embrace the adaptability that is inherent in the steelpan tradition.”

The newfound ability of playing an extended range instrument with four mallets and a reversible bass tip led to the next iteration of exploration. In the past I would often gig with a typical steelpan combo, consisting of a lead voice, strumming voice, bass voice, and percussion. I tended

² Also, a YouTube video explanation of my extended range setup and 4-mallet with reversible bass tip can be found here: <https://youtu.be/ZVoS3rahqkA>

towards a tenor pan, tenor-bass, accompanied with congas and handheld percussion, but variations on this theme are common throughout the steelpan world. I realized the new tenor-bass and tenor pan combination allowed me to play bass lines, strumming patterns, and melodies all as one player. With this new stick technique, I could create a variety of pan combinations depending on the specific needs of what musical piece I played. Pan tuner Steve Lawrie built me a custom set of triple tenor-bass that had a range of F2 up a ninth to G3 on three barrels, which I configured as the root of my setup. I could then swap out the lead pan depending on what range I wanted. A Kyle Dunleavy 26" low G tenor pan created a fully chromatic range without any breaks up to C6, a setup perfect for classical cello works such as the Bach dance suites. Alternately, using a Steve Lawrie 26" C tenor left a small 4-note gap between the tenor-bass range and the lead pan, but worked well for jazz soloing and upper lines.³

I then wondered if I could do the same with an engine room. After many hours slowly rehearsing a typical calypso conga pattern in one hand and the iron in the other hand, while keeping my feet going on various pedals, I was ready to put it all together for the YouTube audience.⁴ Figuring out how I might overdub the one-player pan band with the one-player engine room was the final step. Novel mobile applications such as Acapella and video editing programs such as Adobe Premier have become indispensable for exactly these types of projects.

Like many, I had put off exploring these new applications, considering the learning curve needed to understand audio and video editing tools too steep. Once again, sheltering in place provided the chance to work through that daunting process. I will not say that I am now an expert in either of the aforementioned programs. Rather, I still consider myself a beginner, but I highly recommend looking into these products if you have not yet done so. Acapella is a useful video overdubbing tool, allowing the user to layer videos right on their smartphone in a user-friendly process that does not require large amounts of technical know-how.⁵ Users can also use the application collaboratively online, creating virtual ensemble recordings without each player needing a home recording setup. Applications like Acapella could be a lifeline for performing pannists and steelpan educators

³ An example of an over-extended range consisting of one bass pan, tenor-bass, the Kyle Dunleavy low 26" G-lead, and Steve Lawrie 26" C-lead to create a full four octave range here: <https://youtu.be/bbo5mVGTcHU>

⁴ You can find a YouTube example of the tenor-bass/tenor pan combination with the reversible mallet accompanied by the one-player engine room here: <https://youtu.be/mwlr-JEJTWcM>

⁵ A solo performance example of the overdubbing possibilities with the Acapella app here: <https://youtu.be/BVXTn8aNsPs>

as we continue to work through this pandemic crisis. Such methods may not compare to standing in front of a steelband counting off the first tune of concert, but we can still interact with our students and bandmates through virtual ensemble performances, online collaborations, and streaming live shows.

I do still miss my band, and I cannot wait until we can all rehearse in a room together. Nothing beats the sound and feeling of a live steelband. However, instead of only pining for that time, I encourage us all to embrace the adaptability that is inherent in the steelpan tradition. We can and will develop brand new ways to launch our artform forward, thriving despite the challenges. ■



Extended tenor-bass/tenor setup

TEN THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE COMMISSIONING A COMPOSER FOR THE STEELPAN

MIKE SCHWEBKE

(with contributions from Kyle Krause and Aaron Gage)



Mike Schwebke is a steelpan performer and educator based in the US. Since receiving his Bachelor of Music and Performer's Certificate in steelpan from Northern Illinois University, he has commissioned and premiered over a dozen pieces on steelpan and performed jazz on festival stages in North and South America.

“...pitfalls of the early pans no longer hold it back with respect to art music or modern composition.”

1

Many Composers Won't Know the History of the Steelpan

While I will not dig into the history of the instrument here, I feel that it's crucial for new contributors to the repertoire to be aware of the history of the steelpan. The social unrest around early steelpan and the competitive nature of Panorama culture led to rapid development of the steelpan instrument and the technique of its players. New composers to steelpan need be aware that classical music (most notably the TASPO performances) has been a part of the steelpan identity since its inception. Additionally, the steelpan has been present in jazz and popular music since the late 50's all over the Caribbean and the Americas.

2

Many Composers Won't Realize the Instrument is Fully Chromatic and Tuned

To this day, many musicians do not connect the chromatic sound of the steelpan to their cognitive recognition of the instrument. That is to say, many musicians do not realize that the orchestra of steelpan instruments is fully chromatic. Do not be offended by this. Many musicians simply may not have given this topic much thought. It could even be that they have some knowledge of historic or modern steelpan instruments with limited pitch layouts, such as the Ping Pong and Dudup instruments, the diatonic steelpans of the 40's and 50's, and to a lesser extent, the hand-pans of the last 30 years which generally use a variety of "simplified" diatonic tuning systems. Most often, musicians and composers are excited to learn and glad to know of the expanded possibilities of the steelpan. Those that are not musically literate are often surprised to hear that steelpan uses the same standard notation system as other western instruments.

The intonation of the steelpan has improved in leaps and bounds since the early days of the artform. There are many famous old recordings from as early as the 1940's that cemented some individual's perceptions of what a steelpan sounds like. Over the last century, the instrument has been developed into one with clear and strong pitches with well-controlled overtones. It is no longer the clunky metal instrument of yesteryear. Old-time pans have their own fascinating and beautiful sound, but some of the pitfalls of the early pans no longer hold it back with respect to art music or modern composition.

3

Many Composers Won't Know the Ranges of the Individual Instruments

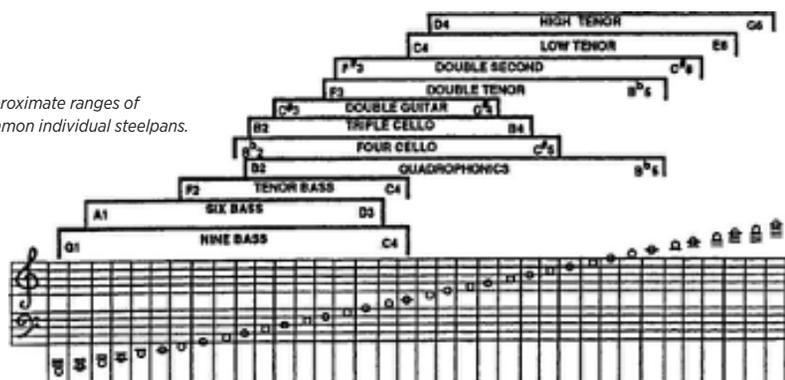
Composers may not realize, even though they may have seen a Tenor Pan or Double Seconds somewhere in popular culture, that there is a full orchestra of voices in the steelpan world. As a pan player, working with a composer that doesn't have experience with steelpans, prepare yourself to use language that the composer will be familiar with. SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) orchestration is usually the most universal way to describe the steel orchestra.

Soprano	Alto	Tenor	Bass
Tenor (Lead)	Double Tenor Double Second	Double Guitar Triple Cello Quadraphonic	Tenor Bass Six Bass Extended Bass (8, 9, 12)

Generally speaking, non-percussionist composers need to be made aware of the safe ranges of each instrument, for instance, avoiding the very highest pitches on the soprano/alto voices, and perhaps, avoiding the lowest ranges of

the tenor/bass instruments to retain clarity and pureness of sound. The texture in the extreme ranges of the pans can be deliberately and carefully used, just like those sounds in the extreme registers of any other modern instrument.

Approximate ranges of common individual steel pans.



Most frequently, composers writing for the steel orchestra need to be made aware of the common four or five voice steelpan ensemble instrumentations, respectively, Tenor, Double Second, Triple Guitar/Cello, Bass; and Tenor, Double Tenor, Double Second, Triple Guitar/Cello, Bass. There are several very good resources on instrument details online. If you intend to work regularly with composers, try to create a packet of key information that includes the details about your instruments, strong sections in your ensemble, audio samples in a variety of styles, and what other supplemental instruments you might have available in your engine room. Composers who are not particularly familiar with steelpan repertoire should listen to multi-instrumental ensembles (steelpan with other instruments), unaccompanied solo steelpan, contemporary full-steel-ensemble pieces, Panorama music, and even jazz or popular music examples with steelpan.

4 Stress to Composers that Just Because the Steelpan is a Percussion Instrument, that Does Not Mean that it is Always Loud

While Panorama performances can be very loud, the steelpan instrument by itself is not a particularly loud instrument. From a musically objective perspective, consider the effective dynamic range of the steelpan instrument to generally fall between *pp* and *mf*. There are some pans by certain builders that can have an extended ability on the high dynamic range, but always educate the composer on the capabilities of the instruments to which you have access. Loud passages are frequently indicated by *ff* dynamic markings, but a composer who is not familiar with steelpan may not be satisfied by the outcome without managed expectations and understanding.

Demonstrate playing excerpts at different dynamic levels at different ranges of each instrument in the steelpan family. Explain how the distorted sound that often happens at very loud dynamics is, in fact, bad for the instrument's intonation in both the short and long term. All of this must be considered when writing for steelpan solo or ensemble. When orchestrating most instruments, one effective way to add dynamic volume to a line of music is to add instruments (unison or octave

doublings) rather than by saying, "play louder." For instance, mimicking ways that voices are emphasized in an ensemble of single timbre can also be an effective compositional model (i.e. string orchestra, brass choir, marimba ensemble, etc.).

5 Stress to Composers that Just Because the Steelpan is a Percussion Instrument, that Does Not Mean One Cannot Savor the Pitch & Timbre

This point is something we sometimes need to remind composers about all pitched percussion instruments. Timpani does not have to thud, marimba can produce a singing melody and accompaniment, and vibraphone can play clear/short pitches. One of the steelpan's most unique characteristics is its beautiful timbre. The instrument and the music can groove and be very percussive in nature, but composers should not be afraid of exposed textures, singularly articulated long rhythmic values, and rolls/long tones.

Steelpan is becoming increasingly common in school's percussion instrument arsenals at all levels of education in the United States. This allows the steelpan to be a great tool for composers to experiment with the timbre and orchestration of ensembles of all levels in an expanded percussion section or percussion ensemble. As the steelpan instrument continues to grow in popularity, there will be increased demand for repertoire at lower grades.

6 Explain to Composers the Physics of the Steelpan Instrument

Anticipating the very active sympathetic vibrations created by the steelpan can often be difficult due to the large quantity of overtones present in the timbre of the instrument. Many of the notes located adjacent to those being struck will vibrate as well since they share a contiguous piece of material. These vibrations can often be easily heard or perceived by an audience. Knowing the layout of whichever pan the composer is writing for can help anticipate this. If adjacent notes fall within the harmonic series, they will likely sound very clearly.

Also, like other mallet percussion instruments, the steelpan speaks slightly after each pitch is struck. This delay is gradually more dramatic within the steel orchestra as the voices get lower. This effect is somewhat due to the nature of energy travelling through the pan and activating sympathetic vibrations, but even the fundamental can take a moment to fully awaken its sound. This can be addressed on an as-needed basis with by the composer or performer but is generally not treated as an issue that affects performance.

7 Explain to Composers the Nature of the Non-Linear Note Arrangement—Then Tell Them to Forget it

There are some musical passages that are more difficult than others on all instruments. The exercise of explaining how awkward certain movements and groupings can be is an important part of the conversation with a new steelpan composer since the instruments are laid out in a circle. It also makes for a very inclusive and experiential process for developing the composer's perceptions of the steelpan. While Invader Tenors are not concentric, virtually all other common layouts for upper voices contain matching octaves in concentric rings within the instrument. This generally allows composers to reiterate

a musical idea an octave up or down from its first presentation with little technical challenge to the performer. This is the case on many percussion instruments, but not necessarily so on string or wind instruments.

Once that conversation is finished, I immediately tell them to forget it. I advise composers to write ideas and themes as they are inspired to do so, regardless of any perceived rules. It is the job of the performer to interpret the musical ideas and make them a reality. If a particular passage happens to be extremely difficult, a responsible performer must prepare it appropriately through slow and methodical practice. One luxury artists have in commissioning composers is that there can be communication before the work is published, and in turn, the process can be very collaborative. If an idea truly doesn't work (orchestration-wise, technically, or otherwise), one can pick up the phone and talk to the composer to develop an executable compromise. Generally, musicians try to prepare material as the composer writes it, but one should also be willing to express valid concerns. Sharing recordings with the composer of excerpts of their work can be valuable and useful. This may initiate changes to be made, especially if the composer's musical intentions are unclear. It also allows the performer and composer to share a collaborative artistic voice with the audience at the premier.

8 Introduce Composers to the Common Implements Used on the Steelpan

The steelpan generally has only one implement: the rubber-tipped mallet. While there are variations on this that can have very subtle effects to the sound of the instrument, many steelpan players are not in the habit of having more than one type available. The common variations that steelpan players should consider possessing are a light, medium and heavy shaft (bamboo, carbon fiber, wood, or aluminum) all with whatever tip material they prefer. Players should also consider having a wrapped-style tip along with a tube rubber option. Some advantages of a wrapped mallet are the fact that the timbre be easily adjusted by wrapping tighter or looser, and that the effective weight can be modified by the wrapping shape or by how the excess rubber is wrapped along the shaft of the mallet.

There are some notable implements that border between common and extended technique. Playing with more than one mallet per hand is a great example, and this technique is becoming more and more common in the steelpan family of instruments. The two notable techniques that don't require carrying extra mallets in your bag are finger-playing and playing col legno. Playing with your fingers can create a variety of timbres, most of which are very thin and quiet. Col legno, in this case, is playing with the back of the stick. The sound is very bright and harsh. I try to limit composers to using this technique only on dynamically soft passages due to the increased risk of damage to the instrument. A common way to limit damage to the instrument while recreating col legno timbre is to play with a very small wooden implement like a chopstick or small wooden dowel.

9 Introduce Composers to the Common Extended Techniques of the Steelpan

Extended techniques are becoming very common in much of the contemporary instrumental repertoire of all kinds; steelpan is no exception. Besides finger playing and col legno playing, other convenient extended techniques include playing the skirt, the rim, or the areas in between note surfaces. Striking the skirt of pans (other than bass) creates a tam-tam like

sound with an indefinite pitch. Rolls and crescendi can be quite effective on the skirt and are often used to create a unique background texture to melodic material. Striking the rim is most frequently done with the shaft of the mallet. Each pan will have a unique response to this technique. Additionally, the position/angle of the mallet strike can have drastically different sound profiles. The area between the note surfaces can be used at very soft dynamic levels for a textural variation or col legno at louder dynamics for a very percussive sound.

Playing harmonics is an appealing sound to many composers, both for the extended range of the instrument and for the textural variation. The capability to play harmonics varies widely from instrument to instrument and must be experimented with by the player. Some harmonics are achieved by striking areas within a larger note surface and isolating the node with a finger or back of a mallet, additional harmonics can be achieved by striking the groove between the note surface and surrounding area. This can be somewhat unpredictable and requires extreme precision to make a replicable sound.

There are a number of extended techniques that will require additional equipment like bowing the skirt, pouring water into the pan, applying magnets to note surfaces, adding vibrating rivets or plucking (rubber) bands to a bore pan. Bowing the skirt creates a bright and screechy sound that is an effective non-pitched texture or accent. Water poured into a non-bore pan can be used as an ambient effect or for pitch bending. Angling the pan slowly back and forth so the water rolls over a given sounded pitch can lower the perceived sound by a whole-step in some cases. The other techniques listed would be considered "prepared" steelpan effects. Adding rubber bands for plucking, rivets for rattling effects or even magnets to deaden (and slightly lower) pitches would generally be done as a preparation in advance of a performance, rather than during the performance itself.

Additional sounds can be achieved with the use of electronics. Microphones, magnetic pickups and transducers can capture and amplify steelpan sound through everything ranging from computer modulating effects or even guitar effects pedals.

10 Remind the Composer that the Steelpan is an Instrument that is Equal to All Other Instruments—And Remind Them to Have Fun!

Every instrument is unique. Composers should not treat the steelpan like a novelty. Although it has a unique timbre and shorter history than most, the steelpan is a modern and capable instrument. The steelpan is as valid as any other instrument—and it should be treated as such. The steelpan community appreciates the care and attention to detail that composers take in the art of creating new repertoire.

When commissioning, it is valuable to share intellectual and musical ideas with composers. It is key to help composers develop a comprehensive understanding of the steelpan instrument so that they can be fully equipped to express their artistry through it. While some composers prefer to work with very little outside input, it is often a give-and-take relationship that results in a piece of music that is most satisfying to all parties involved, including the audience, who will ultimately experience the music.

ADAPTING GEORGE HAMILTON GREEN'S INSTRUCTION COURSE FOR XYLOPHONE FOR STEELPAN

DR. DAVE GERHART



Dave Gerhart is a nationally recognized percussionist, composer, and educator who is the Assistant Marketing Manager, Education for the Yamaha Corporation of America and Lecturer of Percussion at the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at CSU, Long Beach.

As a percussion educator, I have always wondered why I didn't emphasize technical exercises on the steelpan. The first time I took a pan home over the summer as a college student, I started learning scales to get acquainted with the instrument. Once I figured out the notes, I moved directly to learning tunes. I fondly remember that the first tune I learned was the panorama version of Andy Narell's, *We Kinda Music*.

For some reason, it never occurred to me to pull out some of my percussion technique books and use some of those exercises. I just wanted to learn tunes. When I went back to school and went to the first steelband rehearsal, we were handed 4 to 5 tunes. With all of the other instruments I was learning in college, it seemed that my practice time on the steelpan mainly revolved around learning tunes. I have spoken to other steelpan players and educators, and they have had similar experiences in college. After college, I continued to learn tunes so that I could play a 3 or 4 hour set on a gig. I can see now that this was a naive approach to learning the steelpan. It is my hope that students who are beginning to play the steelpan today will learn from this and include some technical exercises into their everyday practice.

Like many of you, since March 16, I have been working from home. I decided to set up my steelpan in my home office so when I had some free time, I could practice. I happened to have a copy of George Hamilton Green's *Instruction Course for Xylophone* on my music stand and I opened it to the first lesson. My mind immediately went to the first time I played these exercises on the xylophone. I began to think, why can't I play these exercises on pan? I opened the book to the first section and started playing the exercises on the steelpan. Once I stopped thinking of them as xylophone exercises, I really enjoyed how they laid on the pan. Recently, two exercises have become a part of my daily practice routine on tenor pan. These two exercises help me to get grounded and put me into a clear mindset for playing music. While I, myself, have applied these strategies to the tenor pan, I know that they can also be adapted to all of the steelpan instruments.

Exercises

The first exercise is #1 from Lesson One. I played this exercise for 8 repetitions and then I transposed it to the key of F major. I continued to play this exercise around the circle of fourths until I got back to C. As I played through the circle of fourths, I noticed that I could do this exercise utilizing two stickings: **L-R-R-L** and **R-L-L-R**. The goal of this exercise is to work on double sticking and avoid playing three notes in a row with one hand.

Lesson One: #1



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The second exercise I practice is 1.R. from Lesson One—Ragtime. This exercise helps me develop a consistent sound when playing diddles. It also addresses the challenge of playing two different stick heights with the accented and non-accented notes.

Lesson One—Ragtime: 1.R.



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I want to challenge everyone who is reading this article to pick up their copy of George Hamilton Green's *Instruction Course for Xylophone*, Bob Becker's *Modern Improvising And Application Of Ideas To Melody*, or any other method book and start playing some exercises on your steelpan. Remember, as you are playing through the exercises, listen to the sound you are making on the instrument, pay attention to where you are playing the note, and work on consistency and accuracy.

Please feel free to reach out to me via e-mail at drdavegerhart@gmail.com and let me know what exercises you are playing on your pan.

MY FAVORITE EXERCISE

EUGENE NOVOTNEY



One of my all-time favorite things to practice on the steelpan is the chromatic scale. I play a low “D” circle of 5ths tenor pan as my primary instrument, and the first thing that any player of the circle of 5ths tenor has to come to terms with when playing the chromatic scale is their sticking. While the chromatic scale is primarily executed using alternate sticking, to complete a full octave of the scale, every player must decide where their transition points for doubling their sticking will occur. Many players choose to double the half-steps between the E & F and the B & C, which are also the natural half steps between the white keys on the piano. Others players choose to double the half-steps between the F & F# and the C and C#, or sometimes, between F# & G and the C# and D. Often, the sticking choice is based on whether the player identifies as right-hand or left-hand dominant. For instance, I am a right-hand dominant player, and in turn, my default stickings always double the right hand.

For my own playing, I have found that different doublings work better at different times depending on the actual chromatic line being played. In most cases, I have found it most beneficial to use a different sticking ascending than I use descending. When ascending the chromatic scale, my most common doubling points are between the E & F and the B & C. When descending, my most common doubling points are between the D & C# and the G & F#. I rarely use the doublings between the F & F# and the C and C#, although I know other players who use that as their default doubling choice for both ascending and descending. For the most comprehensive technique, one could argue that it would be best to practice all of the various doubling options to give the player maximum flexibility when encountering actual chromatic scales in musical passages. But I have observed that most players do default to a certain chromatic sticking that they feel allows them the most fluidity most of the time. For me, it is the sticking that I detailed above.

I created this Chromatic Transition Exercise to help me become more fluid with my default doublings. It reinforces my preferred default doublings while outlining a D minor 7th chord ascending and a Gb (F#) minor 7th chord descending. I could play this exercise forever, and I love to share this exercise with my students. I hope that you find it as useful and as rewarding as I have.

Chromatic Transition Exercise

1
R L R R L R L R

3
R L R R L R L R

5
R L R R L R L R

7
R L R R L R L R

9
R L R R L R L R

11
R L R R L R L R

13
R L R R L R L R

15
R L R R L R L R

GESTURES BROADLY AT EVERYTHING

EMILY LEMMERMAN

Since March 2020, the world has spun upside-down and sideways, and feels shaken, daily. The onset of the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, the national protests, the constant economic and political uncertainty, the great unknowns of the upcoming school year: the upheaval in our lives is unprecedented and constant and dizzying. As many are, I'm coping with unending stress and anxiety. I'm counting my blessings, and grateful for my health, but was as unprepared as everyone else for the world to shut down. It has been a challenge to try to write a piece that is at once reflective and topical and relevant to our broad community. It is difficult to reflect on a situation that continues to be all-consuming.

I've spent the past few months in conversation with friends in the artform in the hope that sharing their individual challenges and strategies here might prove helpful to others. We have all become suddenly isolated, and are trying to adapt to a digital reality, the scope of which continues to grow. This is a particular challenge for our artform, being reliant on audiences and ensemble work, and being so logistically cumbersome in the first place.

I think the programs that are positioned to adjust most adeptly to online life are at the university level—these programs are populated with students and teachers that are relatively well-equipped, well-connected, digitally fluent and flexible. Here, I wanted to include the experience of those who run non-profits, early education programs and community bands, to gain perspective and insight from their stories.

Of course no one was prepared for the pandemic, but in Maryland, **Josanne Francis** had a few extra weeks to brace herself. She's part of a collaborative duo, **Parallel Intersections**, and they were scheduled to perform at the Chinese Embassy in mid-February. That was the first gig Josanne lost because of COVID-19. Her partner, Chao Tian, has family in China, and warned her: "You need to prepare yourself."

Like many educators, Josanne is involved in several projects. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the **Cultural Academy for Excellence** (CAFE), a non-profit arts-in-education program in Maryland, and is the founder of "**Steel on Wheels**", a touring educational steelpan program that creates new opportunities for students and teachers. In March, she was one week into an 11-week residency in Brooklyn in collaboration with Earl Brooks, Jr. when that school closed its doors. Since then, she's done her best to serve her students online. She's young, tech-savvy, and has access to generous personnel that have complementary skills. Her older students pushed her to host an end-of-year **video performance** in June, and she's optimistic she can repeat the experience throughout the upcoming school year. She's powerfully concerned for her students and their families.

CAFE is more than a vehicle for steelpan instruction; it's an after-school destination for kids from age 6-18 that provides academic tutoring, battles food insecurity, and fosters a close community.

She tells me: "After a few weeks into the 'lockdown,' my team and I were able to develop some alternative remote and hybrid programming. As an administrator, we have moved arts and educational programming online, and began working on some projects that would keep the students playing and give them the opportunity to use technology to deliver online content. While trying to find normalcy and adjust our programming, CAFE also developed a free neighborhood pantry which is able to distribute approximately 300 bagged meals weekly." She's using this time as an opportunity to examine and improve the efficiency of the organization with respect to the current global and economic climate.

Josanne considers herself fortunate that her county in Maryland has already suspended all in-person learning until 2021, and she is working under the assumption that all instruction will be online for the entire school year. This enables her to plan a robust curriculum and make sure that mechanisms are in place to reach her students, give them access to instruments, and keep their community support intact. She continues to **perform online regularly**, honoring pre-COVID-19 bookings, and has ambitions to expand her schedule. Josanne is exploring online resources, like **WebinarJam**, and **Airbnb experience** that provide monetizing platforms for performers.

Andre White is currently the musical director for the New York-based steel orchestra, **Pan Evolution**, the arranger for **Mangrove Steelband** in London, and **Pamberi Steel Orchestra** in Trinidad. He also works with schools in the New York area through an organization called "About the Swing," teaching middle and high-school kids jazz theory, steelpan techniques and basic improvisation.

"IT IS DIFFICULT TO REFLECT ON A SITUATION THAT CONTINUES TO BE ALL-CONSUMING."

Andre continues to arrange music for Mangrove and works with them online. London Panorama happens every August, and they are preparing an online presentation for 2020. New York Panorama in September is already cancelled, and while there's no official word on Trinidad Panorama 2021, it seems improbable that it would happen. His school programs were suspended in March, and there's no word yet on this fall. Andre has decided to use this time consciously and productively. He's composing and recording, and has been working on an interview project with Sheldon Thwaites: "The Arranger's Corner." They've completed a first season of in-depth interviews with notable steelpan arrangers and are polishing up the production to present on YouTube. They have ambitions for a second season soon, contributing an important body of work to the artform and providing great resource for educators. He is also considering using this time to pursue his Master's from Berklee.

Here in Austin, CJ Menge quickly and deftly adjusted his programming to our new reality. He's director of the non-profit "**Inside Out Steelband**" which serves the region both inside schools and as a

community organization. Since March, he has already organized a handful of recording projects and performance opportunities for his bands, runs online rehearsal regularly, **published new music**, has hosted several live, virtual concerts featuring **notable guest artists**, and started development of an online kids' show. He credits his productivity to a personal and professional mission statement that is rooted in service to others.

In schools, CJ functions a lot like a consultant, and while he finished the past semester online, he's still unsure how the upcoming school year will work, even as it looms large. Like many states, the Texas school guidelines and expectations are constantly changing, and navigating the situation is a huge challenge. Undoubtedly, each school that CJ works with will require a customized approach.

CJ has developed a curriculum that incorporates relevant historical and cultural lessons, and has put arranging and composition projects in front of his older students. He hopes to supplement those lessons with as many performing opportunities for the kids as possible, and hopes that schools will agree to allow instruments into students' homes, considering it a worthwhile risk to the equipment. Performing is key to keeping kids involved and is crucial for the longevity of a program. Looking ahead to more normal days, he tells me: "It's important that the students will come back to what feels like a robust program, and that really comes down to how directors, at a campus level, prioritize the program right now." Understandably, those directors and students all have a lot going on besides steelband, and CJ is doing his best to remain a perpetually positive, supportive influence for the teachers and kids.

We're all concerned about how social distancing will impact students over this extended shutdown. Ben Leggett, who runs the community youth program **Tri-Cities Steel Band Association** in Central Washington writes: "Because of the nature of TCSBA and the length of time kids are involved (some of my band members have been my students since they were five years old) and the collegiality that we have built over the years through traditions and lore, not to mention all the rehearsals, traveling to gigs, tours, movie nights, game nights etc...THESE KIDS LOVE EACH OTHER. Being apart is tough. They miss being together more than they miss me or the steel drums."

In Florida, Ron Hughes works as a private teacher, contractor, and steelband director at an arts magnet school, a private school, and for a **community band**. He feels successful and satisfied with online private lessons but is unsure whether the format will work for his school groups in a virtual world, especially since some of his steel band students are as young as second grade. In one of his schools, which intends to offer a hybrid reopening model, his steelband space has been co-opted by the band program anyhow, as they attempt to spread out. He does not expect to be teaching in-person for quite some time.

Ron feels eager to begin online community band rehearsals. At the beginning of the pandemic, he found several webinars especially helpful to cope with the many challenges of online teaching. Resources were provided by the **National Association for Music Education**, the **College Music Society**, and the **Drum Circle Facilitators Guild** to help their members run effective online private and group

rehearsals. But he tells me, of his adult group: "I'm not sure whether the band members are motivated to begin without any performance opportunities in the near future. Another challenge would be getting instruments into the hands of our members and to ensure the instruments will be well-cared-for for an extended period of time."

On behalf of other supplemental workers that exist on the periphery of music programs, I'll speak for a moment to my own experience. Tuners don't represent a large percentage of our people, but there are lots of gig-workers, staff and seasonal teachers that exist in a similar way: we don't have annual contracts and cannot functionally do our job while schools (and airports) are closed. We are not essential workers, we do not have unions, we do not have guaranteed income, many of us cannot transition our job online. In some cases, we are being asked to choose between our own health and our livelihood.

As a tuner, I have very few ways to adapt to this new reality. I'm unable to travel, and I can't tune your pans online. Although I have a workshop on my property, I'm often too exhausted to work after I put my preschoolers to bed. Without childcare, it's difficult to access any energy to engage in creative enterprise. I spend most days staring at numbers on my computer, applying for assistance. My life is an endless loop of what feels like doing my taxes, daily, endlessly, with Paw Patrol as my soundtrack, and often with two small people trampling over me like a human playground.

I see no meaningful way to do my job at the moment, and I am grieving this loss of my core identity. I have many peripheral interests in this artform, but I have not been nearly as productive as any of the admirable people I've referenced above. I'm very tired. I try to allow myself as much grace as I can muster. I'm doing my best to find peace in doing so little. I've had a few virtual gigs, but Zoom interviews and online performances are a bittersweet way for me to connect with our community. These events are far from normal and leave me with a profound sense of sadness in this new, lonely world. And fundamentally, I miss my hammers. I love my job; I miss it powerfully. But it feels like a small thing to forfeit, relatively. Here, I *gesture broadly at everything*.

AND FUNDAMENTALLY, I MISS MY HAMMERS. I LOVE MY JOB; I MISS IT POWERFULLY. BUT IT FEELS LIKE A SMALL THING TO FORFEIT, RELATIVELY."

And as we all consider the intersection of our artform and our world, it is immediately important, within a curriculum and as humans, to acknowledge and honor its black roots. Many directors actively incorporate steelband history into their lessons, **but we can do more, and do better**. When I asked Josanne to speak directly to white educators about how we can address the importance of Black culture into pan pedagogy, her advice was: be deliberate, honest, and use the instrument to illustrate the parallels to Black struggles worldwide. "The story of the pan is one of resistance, rebellion, resilience, and redemption. You have this beautiful instrument now... that had always been beautiful, but people just didn't see it like that." Andre acknowledged: these are difficult conversations, we're facing

difficult truths, but that we must commit to an open dialogue. "We must listen to the people that are indigenous to the culture and diaspora, and give respectful weight to those African voices." He told me how frustrating it is when white professionals attempt to educate him about the artform, as if his own experience is incomplete or irrelevant. When I asked Josanne whether any white colleagues had yet asked for her perspective on the issue, her answer was short: "No. No... no." Her advice is straightforward: "Do not pretend this isn't happening."

Everyone is struggling. Everyone is in a wildly individual situation that are variations on many common themes. We are all frustrated with the ill-equipped unemployment system that is failing us and our students' families in every state. We are getting good at writing grants. Some of us are digitally fluent, some of us struggle with the new formats and platforms. I know professors that want to stand up to administrative demands on behalf of those without tenure. I know teachers that have outfitted their rehearsal space with plexiglass pods, just to close down again in their second week of class. I know teachers that haven't heard from some students since the pandemic began. We are all trying to strike a balance between our own economic health, our own physical health, the health and happiness of our children and our students and our community, with the work that we love doing and badly miss.

All of us have lost work, all of us have lost income, lost funding. All of us have lost opportunities and experiences. None of us will be paid for work we can't do. All of us are worried for our kids, our communities, our livelihood, our health. Many of us are struggling with the economic impact. Some of us are concerned for our personal safety. Some of us have lost loved ones. It is impossible to know how we will come through this, and we won't really, until we're on the other side. There's only one thing we can be sure of: tomorrow will be different from today.

It is impossible for me not to acknowledge that despite it all, everyone I've spoken with is determined to use this time as an opportunity for growth and service. As I've built this article, these conversations have been cathartic and encouraging. They've lightened my heart and reminded me of the passion and depth and range of our community. I will do my best to embrace the spirit of my favorite sentence from Ron Hughes: "I'm excited about the future, whenever it happens." Maybe this will also be a story of resilience and redemption.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Lemmerman builds and tunes pans for her company, Barracuda Steel Drums, based in Austin, Texas, and is the only woman working full-time as a professional steelpan craftsman and tuner. She travels to work with bands around the world primarily as a tuner, but also as a clinician, adviser, songwriter and performer. Through her travels, Emily has gained uncommon access to and perspective on the global steelband landscape, and has cultivated relationships with many vibrant and interesting people in our worldwide steelband family. This column will feature some of their stories.





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