Tropicalism and the Struggle for Legitimacy: A History of the Steel Band Movement in American Universities

Janine Tiffe
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

TROPICALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LEGITIMACY:
A HISTORY OF THE STEEL BAND MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

By

JANINE TIFFE

A Dissertation submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2015

© 2015 Janine Tiffe
Janine Tiffe defended this dissertation on March 25, 2015

The members of the supervisory committee were:

Michael B. Bakan
Professor Directing Dissertation

Kimberley VanWeelden
University Representative

Denise Von Glahn
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Michael Bakan, Kimberly VanWeelden, and Denise Von Glahn, for working with me through this long and arduous process; each of you have left an enduring impression upon my work. Thanks to Nathan Tiffe, Daniel E. Dodds, Chris Tanner, Paschal Yao Younge, and Ellie Mannette for my musical inspiration and setting me on this musical journey. Thanks to my mother, Ann Tiffe, a better mother none has ever had, and Andy Klopfenstein, for their limitless parental support. Thanks to Angie Kettlehake Dom, Lauren White, Kayleen Justus, Mia Gormandy, Lisa Osunleti Beckley-Roberts, Plamena Kourtova, Kristina Winters, and Eddie Dorman for their emotional and humanistic support in my life and in this work. Michaela Lupiani, this would not be possible without your assistance in printing my dissertation, and shuttling it around campus with timely precision, on multiple occasions. Thanks to Ed and Linda Oaksford for providing me with the perfect balance of attention and solitude, exercise and rest, feast and fast, during the week of my defense. I would like to thank all members of my pan family at Miami University, Kent State University, West Virginia University, Women in Steel, Invaders Steel Orchestra, Florida State University, Steel Crazy, and Pans de León.

“If we stand tall it is because we stand on the backs of those who came before us.” – Yoruba Proverb

This dissertation is dedicated to my ancestors.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .................................................................................................................................................. v
Abstract ............................................................................................................................................................ vi

1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................................... 1

2. PAN COMES TO THE UNITED STATES ...................................................................................................... 30

3. A HISTORY OF PAN IN U.S. UNIVERSITIES ............................................................................................ 49

4. EXTERNAL ENTITIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON U.S. UNIVERSITY PAN PROGRAMS ........................................ 106

5. IN DIALOGUE WITH ELLIE MANNETTE .................................................................................................. 150

6. CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................................... 165

APPENDICES

A. UNITED STATES PAN PUBLISHING COMPANY INFORMATION ............................................................ 172
B. QUESTIONS FOR PUBLISHING COMPANIES AND PAN PROFESSIONALS ........................................ 175
C. ENSEMBLE WINNERS ............................................................................................................................... 176

References ......................................................................................................................................................... 177

Biographical Sketch ........................................................................................................................................ 187
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Original Miami University Steel Band</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The development of steel bands in U.S. Universities as influenced by Ellie Mannette – historical influences and teacher-student connections</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Northern Illinois University</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2002 Caterpillar Footwear Advertisement</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Members of the University of Oklahoma New Horizons Steel Drum Band</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Flamingo as Tropical Signifier</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Suzuki Music Steel Drums for Reggae Gathering</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Images from Friskies TV commercial (2012)</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2008 Chick-fil-A promotional calendar</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Images from Capital One TV commercial (2010)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mobile shaved ice booth broadcasts steelpan music</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Jamaican steel drum ring on Etsy.com (2011)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Idol Hands children's toy</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Beethoven &quot;Minuet in G&quot; from Piano sonata Opus 49, no. 2</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Steel bands have steadily gained popularity in the United States, particularly in educational institutions like colleges and universities. The dissemination of pan has occurred from teacher to student, and in turn, by these same students becoming teachers. As pan has spread, distinctive “American” interpretations, sounds, performance practices, and cultural usages have emerged in colleges and universities, and across greater U.S. society. This dissertation is a history of the steel band movement in the United States focusing on colleges and universities, and the particular contributions and lineage of one of that movement’s principal figures, Ellie Mannette. As an instrument maker, tuner, composer, performer, pedagogue, Trinidadian culture-bearer, and international ambassador of the steelpan, Mannette has left lasting contributions on the U.S. pan movement, particularly within educational institutions. Moreover, this study examines the transnational identities and portrayals of pan, including those relating to stereotypical and anti-stereotypical imagery and symbolism connected to “tropical” and “island” cultures. This dissertation explores how the legitimacy of pan is alternately supported and rejected within, and by, an American musical culture of higher education that has traditionally positioned the Western art music tradition and its associated institutions at the zenith of musical culture.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

He has always envisioned a symphony of steel performing at his retirement concert, under the wand of a proper conductor. As a devoted fan of classical music, Ellie Mannette’s life’s work has been devoted to developing the steel drum with exceptional professionalism in the hopes that it will eventually take its rightful place as a standard, canonized musical instrument. “This is the type of music I prefer for the instrument…,” he has stated. “Classical music is what I always wanted, and I’ll pursue [it] until I die.”1 On April 10, 2008, at the age of 82, Mannette, renowned instrument craftsman, educator, musician, guest artist, bandleader, and steel band community leader, whose contributions to the pan world have affected thousands, officially retired from his position as artist-in-residence at West Virginia University. A concert in his honor was presented, featuring many prominent former students. While no classical music was performed, Jeff and Andy Narell, Chris Tanner, Jason Koontz, and Gordon Nunn all contributed their compositions and their university steel bands for one large, en masse retirement concert. The performance and its surrounding event were a veritable microcosm of the history and musical culture of the collegiate steel band movement in the United States, in which no other figure has been more musically or historically significant than Mannette.

Ellie Mannette is a central figure to the U.S. steel band movement in universities. In Trinidad, he was a pioneer builder of steelpans and composer of steel band music from its early days and he has shaped the development of the modern version of the instrument from the mid-

1 Desiree Sampson, Stradivarius of Steel: The Ellie Mannette Story, DVD (des-Sound Productions, 2004).
20th century until today. His involvement began in 1937 and he contributed innovations to the construction of instruments, including utilizing a concave playing surface for pans in 1941 and the use of a 55-gallon oil barrel from which to craft the steel drum in 1946 (Gibson 1986a:34-36).

In the late 1960s, Murray Narell, a social worker with the Educational Alliance of Manhattan’s Lower East Side, wanted to begin a steel drum program to keep area teenagers out of street gangs (Jette 1991:14). Initially, Narell hired Antiguan exchange student Rupert Sterling to construct instruments and teach a single group of teenagers. As membership steadily increased, Narell went to Trinidad to find a more permanent and professional steel drum builder and he found Ellie Mannette. With his outstanding reputation as a panman, particularly as an instrument craftsman, Mannette was a prime candidate for the job, and Narell subsequently invited him to the U.S. to build drums for and teach the students in the Manhattan program. Mannette, however, experienced racist incidents during his first trip to the United States and needed some convincing to return and stay (Nurse 2007:385). Concurrently, he received criticism from the Trinidadian government, his community, and his family for refusing a government-sponsored academic scholarship to study in England (Gibson 1986a:37) in favor of working with Narell and the students in New York. Ultimately, he made the decision to immigrate to the United States, where he made his permanent home.

There were only a few steel bands in the United States when Mannette arrived in 1967 (George 1994:31). Many of them were in New York City and were supported by large West Indian immigrant communities. Mannette worked with inner city community groups for roughly five years, during which time he founded about a dozen bands. He also helped teach and crafted

---

2 The steelpan went through several iterations prior to modern version, which took shape in 1946 when crafted from a 55-gallon oil barrel for the first time. This barrel size is still the standard today.
instruments for the Narell family band, which included Murray’s two young sons, Jeff and Andy. The boys founded their own group, the Steelbandits, and began performing at local schools and hospitals. Within a year of his arrival, Mannette also established steel bands in New York public schools, and began working with collegiate programs.

Mannette continued crafting drums and educating a diverse range of student musicians while the Narell family had moved to California in the late 1960s. Without Mannette as their regular mentor, teenaged Jeff and Andy developed their own musical ideas, including the incorporation of jazz into the pan idiom. As students at the University of California at Berkeley, Jeff and Andy founded a steel band. Since their geographic parting, the Narells and Mannette have maintained close contact, personally and professionally. Jeff and Andy have achieved international recognition as composers and performers. Andy’s professional career has been especially prolific and he is recognized for pioneering the use of steel drums in jazz and as a solo instrument in the United States. In the late 1970s and 1980s, he traveled the U.S. extensively, touring college campuses to work with bands on performance techniques and arranging. Narell also had far-reaching influence on many budding pannists as a result of radio airplay of albums such as *Stickman, Light in Your Eyes, Slow Motion, The Hammer, Little Secrets, and Down the Road*.

With a supply of instruments from Ellie Mannette and the performance and compositional contributions of Andy Narell, steel band has become an increasingly accessible, convenient, and popular idiom for educators and students alike, including in colleges and universities. Numerous schools in the United States have made steel band a significant part of the undergraduate curriculum and have emphasized performance practice, cultural history, or both. Growth and dispersion of pan has occurred from teacher to student and by students
becoming teachers. As it has spread, uniquely “American” sounds, performance practices, and cultural customs have developed in colleges and universities and in broader U.S. society.

**Thesis Statement**

This dissertation is a history of the steel band movement in the United States, focusing on the distinctive contributions and lineage of one of that movement’s principal figures, Ellie Mannette. As an instrument maker, tuner, composer, performer, pedagogue, Trinidadian culture-bearer, and international ambassador of the steelpan, Mannette has left lasting contributions on the U.S. pan movement, particularly within educational institutions. The story of his own odyssey and the lineage he has established through his work with numerous institutions such as the Navy Steel Band, Oberlin University, West Virginia University, Miami University, and the University of Georgia, as well as through his influence on individuals including Jeff and Andy Narell, Shannon Dudley, Chris Tanner, Darren Dyke, and Glenn Rowsey, has largely shaped the culture of steel band music in the United States and beyond. In the process, everything from the material culture of the steelpan and steel band to cultural aesthetics, exoticism, economics, transnationalism, and conceptions of authenticity and legitimacy in steel band music has been affected by Mannette and his legacy. It is also essential to acknowledge from the outset that the particular trajectory of his life and legacy offers only a partial portrait of the complex and multidimensional development of the steel band as an institution of collegiate musical life and culture in the United States. Interwoven with Mannette’s story and legacy are those of at least one other Trinidadian-born, U.S.-based luminary, Cliff Alexis, as well as other figures from Trinidad and the U.S. who have contributed in decisive and influential ways. In telling the story of this dissertation mainly through the lens of Mannette, I incorporate the stories of these other
influential figures to some extent as well, but as any single work can only encompass so much, it should be understood that the present one is necessarily limited by a narrative that places Mannette and his web of influence at its center.

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this project is to examine pan through historically impactful individuals and institutions of the U.S. collegiate steel band movement in order to understand the processes that have been involved in establishing the steel band and its music as legitimate institutions of post-secondary musical culture in the United States. Moreover, this investigation will consider the influences of, departures from, and representations of steel band music convention and culture as it has moved from Trinidad and Tobago to the U.S. This study is significant in that it moves beyond the “master narrative” (Stuempfle 1995) of steel band as a historical, musical, and cultural phenomenon of Trinidad and Tobago to instead examine its transnational identities and portrayals, including those relating to stereotypical and anti-stereotypical imagery and symbolism relating to “tropical” and “island” cultures. Through a socio-historical and musical examination of key components of the history of the steel band movement in the United States—in particular, the culture of pan in the United States as fostered and shaped by Ellie Mannette in college and university contexts—I will explore how the legitimacy of pan is alternately supported and rejected within, and by, an American musical culture of higher education that has traditionally positioned the Western art music tradition and its associated institutions at the zenith of musical culture.
Theoretical Approach

The steel band art form has received little scholarly attention in terms of its arrival, dissemination, and use in American colleges and universities, despite its steady growth in popularity, pedagogical prominence, and aesthetic significance over the course of the past few decades. Addressing this phenomenon ethnomusicologically calls for a multidimensional theoretical approach. In particular, this dissertation will build upon the central theme of tropicalism (the discussion of which I expand upon below) and sub-themes that I refer to as legitimacy, musicultural transformation, and identity construction. In the following section, I define these terms and explain their function within the context of the dissertation.

Tropicalism and Anti-Tropicalism

*Tropicalism*\(^3\) is a concept developed in this dissertation that is inspired by (and partially adapted from) Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism (Said 1979). In his book of the same title, Said notes that “…such locales, regions, geographical sectors as ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ are man-made” and are essentially inventions of Western cultural and economic hegemony that have historically advanced the agendas of such hegemony (Said 1979:5). A connection can be made between the notion of “Oriental” and the notion of “tropical” in the Western public imagination. Most people of the United States amalgamate Trinidadian music traditions of steel drums and calypso with Jamaican reggae, Hawaiian luaus, or Polynesian attire. These stereotypes of cross-island or cross-tropical themes are conglomerations, sometimes having little, if anything, to do with actual Caribbean or Polynesian musicultural traditions at all, and much more to do with

---

\(^3\) My use of tropicalism should not be confused with tropicalismo or tropicália, the Brazilian artistic movement in the late 1960s that encompassed art forms such as theatre, poetry, and music and used a combination of the popular and the avant-garde, as well as a fusion of traditional Brazilian culture with foreign influences, including American rock music. While there is some overlap between the two by way of the amalgamation of differing musicultures, my combination is exclusive to the merging of “tropical” musicultures.
Hollywood-style fabrications of “island” or “tropical” cultures. In other words, returning to Said, “…it is not ‘truth’ but representations…there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or representation” (Said 1979:21). Insofar as Orientalism is an over-generalized invention and homogenization of an extraordinarily wide range of musical and cultural practices, I make connections between the terms tropicalism and Orientalism and advance a theoretical consideration of tropicalism as a key feature of engaging the culture and public perception of steel band music and performance both in the United States and in Trinidad and Tobago. In Said’s words, the typical Western person’s Orient “is not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized” (Said 1979:104); this can be productively analogized to the case for “the tropics” or “the islands” as a construct of Western imagination rather than a reflection of cultural realities, and with similar implications.

For example, steel bands are regularly hired to perform at backyard, Hawaiian-style luau where musicians are asked to wear Polynesian shirts with leis, and play Jamaican reggae songs. Moreover, these same practices are found at high school, college, and community steel band concerts throughout the United States. Again, to quote Said, in the Orientalist narrative, “what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia’s use to modern Europe” (Said 1979:115). Similarly, the musicultural history of the steel drum does not matter to people in the United States as much as how pan can be used—not just musically, but also ideologically and culturally. The point, continuing the analogy with Said, is not that there is “no corresponding reality” (Said 1979:5) to the cultural constructions of Orientalism or tropicalism, but rather that whatever these realities are or may be is subordinate to their ideological utility. “My whole point about this system,” explains Said, “is not that it is a misrepresentation of some Oriental essence – in which I do not
for a moment believe – but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual, and even economic setting” (Said 1979:273).

Other than utilizing tropicalism to explain the essentialization of tropical cultures, musics, and artifacts in relationship to the steelpan and other tropical island locations, I will also use tropicalism to incorporate other aspects of Said’s argument including the use of ideology to maintain socio-political, pedagogical, and racial power structures via the continued reproduction and reemphasis of decades-old performance practices and repertoires that have been used historically to repress transformation and alternatives in postcolonial societies. Moreover, I will utilize Said’s theories, which echo those of other cultural historians and theorists such as Michel Foucault (Rabinow 1991), to support the idea that academic knowledge can and does generate power. Within tropicalism theory, there is much potential for addressing issues of race and gender, and indeed this dissertation could potentially open many such doors, but in this project I will only address those encompassed within the relatively narrow scope of how the general arc of my discussion of tropicalism develops.

Though parallels between my ideas of tropicalism and Said’s on Orientalism are certainly germane as discussed thus far, I see the project of tropicalism as a different realm than what Said posits for Orientalism, at least in the context of the American collegiate steel band movement. A primary difference between my use of tropicalism and Said’s use of Orientalism is that I am not using the term to tackle issues of geo-politics, religion, or physical violence. While Said’s argument focuses primarily on academia’s Orientalists, my project address tropicalism within academia as well as in popular culture. Windschuttle (1999) accused Said of essentializing European academics in the same way Said purports that European academics essentialize the Orient: without nuance or inclusion of the everyday experience. My project works endeavors to
work against such essentialisms in its ethnographic prioritization of the voices of my research collaborators during the fieldwork process, that of Ellie Mannette most of all.

While some steel band groups utilize tropicalism to market themselves, others overtly eschew the concept and instead embrace a type of anti-tropicalism whereby they intentionally play against preconceived stereotypes. Repertoire and concert dress are two domains in which bands have resisted tropicalism. The Oberlin College steel band focuses on panorama arrangements⁴ and refuses to wear tropical-style shirts; the Mott Community College steel band often wears tuxedos for their performances. Miami University’s steel band emphasizes the playing of original compositions for steel bands, instead of more “cliché” repertoire. The tensions between tropicalism and anti-tropicalism are thus allied with complex issues of representation, as is demonstrated through the different bands’ selections of repertoire, attire, and performance engagements.

**Legitimacy**

In this dissertation I will address and describe issues of anti-tropicalism through the lens of legitimacy. Since the inception of pan, pannists have worked tirelessly to prove the validity of their instrument, and therefore, themselves, that is, to prove their musical and societal legitimacy and in turn the legitimacy of their musical art (Dudley 2002b, Dudley 2008, Stuempfle 1995). The battle to demonstrate worth and importance has taken a different shape in Trinidad than it has in the United States, and notably for different reasons. In Trinidad, the struggle originated from stigmas relating to the low socioeconomic status of pioneering pannists. However, in the

---

⁴ Arrangements for panorama, a type of steel band competition, are exceptionally long and difficult and generally contain multiple key changes and stylistic changes throughout the composition.
United States much of the struggle for legitimacy stems from the early association of the calypso craze (viewed through the lens of exoticism and novelty) with pan music and culture.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “Etymologically, the word expresses a status which has been conferred or ratified by some authority.” Generally, “legitimate” may be used to indicate the legal status of children; hereditary right; a genuine work (of an author, for example); whether an object or act is sanctioned, authorized, or conformable by law or rule; proper; normal, regular, or standard in type; or if an item or action is valid, acceptable, justifiable, or reasonable. Likewise, within the domain of music, the term legitimate commonly refers to musics that are considered serious, as opposed to those considered as mere novelty or ephemeral. As defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, the term designates “‘serious’ music as distinct from jazz or popular music.” Examples have indicated the appropriateness of different musics for different occasions or uses, and by extension the existence of a hierarchy of music styles within society.⁵ Again, as the common understanding of legitimate means legal, authorized, proper, normal, standard, valid, and acceptable, those musics considered legitimate are therefore preferable to those that are not legit (OED 2012a).⁶

This dissertation will also utilize scholarly music writings that address the endeavor of “non-classical” musics to gain legitimacy. As a commentary on the complicated road to

---

⁵ Examples of this usage range from an April 1927 Melody Maker write-up noting, “The number lends itself exceptionally well to the symphonic treatment it has been given, the orchestration is very fine and the modulated passages and general arrangement make it, although a little too ‘legitimate’ for dancing, perfect from a concert point of view”; to a Fortune magazine account in August of 1933 discussing jazz: “Other jazz heroes such as the Dorsey[sic] have become more or less legitimate musicians for radio purposes”; to a review in the December 1969 issue of the New Yorker comparing symphonic musicians to commercial musicians: “It would have been interesting if he had made similar measurements during a performance by a ‘commercial’—that is, a jazz or dance-band—player to compare with those of a ‘legitimate,’ or symphonic, player.”

⁶ The term “legit” is an acknowledged colloquial abbreviation of the term legitimate. Some examples of this mode of expression within the arts include the May 1897 issue of National Police Gazette, “Bob is envious of Corbett’s success as a ‘legit’. It pained him to see Jim strutting through four acts of a real play,” a 1923 letter written by Harry Ruby about Vaudevillian actor and comedian Groucho Marx, “He clicked as a legit actor on Broadway,” and Christopher Wood’s 1970 novel Terrible Hard, says Alice, “I’ve never been ‘legit’ as you might say..., just an old-fashioned song and dance girl,” (OED 2012b).
legitimize jazz, Ingrid Monson states in her book, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*:

Historically, the concept of absolute music offered a way for jazz enthusiasts to prove to the unbelieving musical academy that jazz improvisation and composition warranted serious attention. By preparing transcribed scores from recordings and identifying musical characteristics highly valued in Western classical music – including sophisticated harmony, complex voice leading, thematic integration and large-scale planning – analysts could circumvent the prevailing hierarchical view that improvisation was less worthy of a musical analysis than composition. (1996:4)

U.S. pan scholars Jeannine Remy and Kenyon Williams both examined the complex musical structures found in Panorama scores in their dissertations “A Historical Background of Trinidad and Panorama Competitions with an Analysis of Ray Holman’s 1989 Panorama Arrangement of ‘Life’s Too Short’” and “…By Which All Others are Judged: An Analytical Look at the Arranging Styles of Four Panorama Arrangers With an Original Composition for Steel Drum Ensembles,” respectively, demonstrating that steel band music is more than simple, three-chord progressions. In his 2002 article, “Dropping the Bomb: Steelband Performance and Meaning in 1960s Trinidad,” Shannon Dudley shows the relationship between pan music and the most ‘legitimate’ of musics – classical – taking an academic approach to the connection between the two.

Similarly, in his 2008 book *Music From Behind the Bridge: Steelband Spirit and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*, Dudley utilizes Thomas Turino’s concept of “modernist reformism” to describe the “process by which middle class intellectuals seek to modernize lower-class performance traditions and to put them on display in ways that conform more closely to cosmopolitan conventions…” (16). Again, by making disparate music systems more comparable to relatively familiar Western art and academic structures, Western listeners and scholars are more likely to connect with divergent musics, and consider them worthwhile, valid, and
legitimate. One example of pan music fitting the academic model is end-of-the-semester concerts where an audience politely observes and claps when appropriate, rather than participating extemporaneously with the music event at hand.

Those who determine what is and is not legitimate within academia commonly fluctuate between custom and change. In *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde*, Georgina Born identifies the primary sources of musical legitimization in Western art music culture: “First, the institutionalized authority of the teacher or curator responsible for pedagogy, devotion to tradition – essentially for reproduction. Second, the authority of the artist or creator with prophetic ambitions, which is personal and rests on flashes of originality” (1995:28) regarding the balance and power struggle of who has authority over which types of music and which musical works are deemed legitimate. Ellie Mannette embodies both sides of this coin as a native Trinidadian who moved to the United States and continues to experiment with instrument crafting. Another important consideration is who and what determines whom and what is legitimate. To again quote Born:

> It seems to me probable, and very necessary, that some kind of cultural sphere defined not by the market but by judgments of legitimacy fueling cultural policy and subsidy will continue to exist. The question then becomes: what kinds of legitimacy, judged how and by whom, how instituted, how productively, and with what status vis-à-vis other cultural orders? (11)

Therefore, within academia, what makes a steel band legitimate? Many university pan programs work toward legitimizing pan and legitimizing the performance and multicultural aspects of their own institutions by “properly” representing pan, but as problematized by Edward Said in *Orientalism*, in “…discussing the problems of human experience: How does one represent other cultures? What is another culture?” (1979:325). What constitutes a legitimate pan program, or use of pan, in a U.S. university? Some programs consider their in-house music arranger(s) to be
a notable component of their authenticity; others tout frequency of performances as consequential. Authenticity, accurate music and cultural representations, pedagogical techniques, level of musicianship, connections with culture bearers, repertoire, and performance practice are elements that are vital and prioritized, albeit differently, depending on the program.

**Musicultural Transformation**

As defined in Michael Bakan’s *World Music: Traditions and Transformations*, tradition is “a process of creative transformation whose most remarkable feature is the continuity it nurtures and sustains” (Bakan 2007:xxviii). The birth of the steel pan arose from repeated adaptations and transformations spawned by musical and cultural necessity, along with the creative inspiration of several Trinidadians. Craftsman Ellie Mannette pioneered a number of these changes both in his native Trinidad and in the United States. In Trinidad, as was mentioned earlier, Mannette was the first panman to build a pan with a concave playing surface, and build a pan out of a 55-gallon oil barrel. In the U.S., Mannette was able to conform to Western tuning standards when introduced to the stroboscopic tuner. A faculty appointment at West Virginia University provided him the financial security to continue refining his tuning techniques, pass on his skills to a younger generation of tuners, and develop a brand-new voice in the pan art form, the quaduet. Simultaneously, Mannette was teaching American university students about pan technique, Trinidadian culture, and impressing upon them his preference for classical music in pan repertoire. Mannette’s life is an example of tradition and transformation as manifest in the actions and decisions of a culture bearer who, in his adulthood, moved to the U.S. and continued the progression of the steel pan in keeping with his new cultural surroundings.

---

7 A stroboscopic tuner is a sophisticated electronic tuner that shows the difference between a musical pitch and its desired vibrational frequency.
In recognizing that the world no longer predominantly consists of isolated cultural groups but rather of intersecting musical subcultures and “micromusics” (Slobin 1993), we can discontinue the concept of pan as strictly a Trinidadian or Caribbean phenomenon. Musics of the world have increasingly become altered and intertwined with continued advancements in global communication technologies. Pan, or steel band, is no exception and may be productively explored through this lens.

In addition to the instrument itself, the academic application of pan in the United States has been transformed from its Trinidadian roots in terms of new repertoire, publications (both music and texts), media applications, and educational curricula. Inasmuch as these transformations have altered both the musical and cultural world of steel band on an international level, pan in United States universities warrants investigation within these new parameters. University bands do not only exist to preserve, but to further the progress of the steel band movement. Arjun Appadurai has discussed the drawbacks of restricting anthropological research to single geographic locations or theoretical perspectives in his article “Theory in Anthropology: Center and Periphery.” Nevertheless, the bulk of extant pan research pertains to Trinidad, the West Indies, and the “master narrative” of pan relating to these histories (Dudley 2004, Stuempfle 1995). In spite of this, the steel drum is performed on every inhabited continent, and continually adapted into contemporary and diverse musical settings. Its broader reach invites scholarly study, and this dissertation represents one step in that direction.

**Identity Construction**

As discussed in Stephen Stuempfle’s seminal 1995 work, *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago*, the steel band movement is inextricably
linked to Trinidadians of African descent. While the idea of solitary ownership has been increasingly challenged in the past few decades in contemporary sources, as the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, cultural possession of the steel drum continues to be an issue of heritage and pride to be guarded from appropriation. Although many Trinidadians identify the steel pan with their culture, and the instrument is an official national symbol of the Trinidadian nation, pan has also taken on new identities during the nearly sixty years it has been in the United States and consideration of these is an important component of the dissertation.

These new identities have reached far beyond the parameters of diasporic contexts discussed by scholars such as Ray Allen in “J’ouvert in Brooklyn Carnival: Revitalizing Steel Pan and Ole Mas Traditions” (1999). In several cases, the pan has effectively been reinvented in its new locales. In Brooklyn-based and other immigrant communities in the U.S., some West Indians have tightly clung to their homeland identity (including the use of pan), while others have openly welcomed new musical situations.

Andy Narell has been a pivotal figure in this process in the United States by providing a unique musical voice for pan through his compositions and incorporation of pan in the jazz idiom. He has paved the way for non-Trinidadian and non-West Indian pannists to be considered legitimate steelpan performers and composers. Over his long musical career, Narell has progressed from a child pannist to a jazz musician who plays pan, to a pan player composing fully orchestrated works for steel bands. His changing musical preferences mirror the identity, logistic, and legitimacy struggles many pannists have regarding identity and legitimacy. To what extent it is important to play “traditional” music such as calypsos, socas, and other “island
favorites,” or promote U.S.-based “Pan Progress”\(^8\) depends upon how you hope to be viewed as a musician, culture bearer, cultural insider or outsider, or culturally aware participant.

In this dissertation, legitimacy, tropicalism, musicultural transformation, and identity formation will be explored within the framework of the collegiate steel band movement in the United States. Specifically, they will be used as theoretical lenses through which to view activities and trends regarding directors and musicians, university support and institutionalization, instrumentation, repertoire, performance practice, cultural inclusions/exclusions, and rehearsal techniques, among and between various college programs and the greater U.S. society. Moreover, an examination of non-collegiate support structures, such as instrument crafters (Mannette Steel Drums, Coyle Drums, Darren Dyke, Panyard Inc., Cliff Alexis, and Tom Reynolds) and music publishers (Panyard Inc., Hillbridge Music, Pan Ramajay Productions, and Engine Room Publishing) will supplement my discussion of pan in these U.S. colleges and universities. Finally, I contextualize the life and legacy of Ellie Mannette within the historical development of college and university steel bands in the United States. His work has informed each band’s claim to legitimacy, perspectives on tropicalism, approaches to transformation, and positions on identity.

Beyond its inherent interest and significance, the history of steel band in the U.S. figures prominently in the transnational and global steel band movement at many levels, including on levels of dispersion and individual agency. More broadly, we gain a comprehension of not only how steel band has and will continue to affect musical change in the aforementioned institutions, but also how change has been shaped by and within these institutions, and how steel bands fit into the greater soundscape of the United States. The research findings of this study will

---

\(^8\) Pan Progress is the name of a steel band piece by Trinidadian pannist Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, and the name of an album by the Our Boys Steel Orchestra. At the time of the album’s recording, Our Boys Steel Orchestra was comprised of Trinidadians based in San Francisco, California.
therefore provide an important foundation and nexus for future research projects of my own and of other steel band scholars.

Survey of literature

Though the steel band literature is diverse and encompasses multiple disciplines, I will discuss six specific categories: history, dispersion, biography, organology, repertoire and compositional technique, and education. These categories comprise the majority of pan scholarship to date, and will be expanded upon in this dissertation with a focus on legitimacy in the U.S. steel band movement within university environs.

History

Historical accounts have focused on a variety of topics, but generally include, at minimum, a basic rendition of the musicultural development of pan. Such chronological metanarratives discuss the influences of African music cultures on pan and calypso, developmental stages of the instrument, national identity, carnival, and competition (Gibson 1986; O’Connor 1981; Ryan 1994; Seeger 1958; Stuempfle 1995; Trelka 2001). Other scholars of Trinidadian pan history have centered their historical attentions on particular aspects of the metanarrative. Shannon Dudley (1997), Michael Anthony (1989), and Errol Hill (1972) each address pan’s relation to the Lent-season celebration of carnival. Dudley discusses music traditions associated with carnival: calypso, soca, chutney, and pan. Steel band repertoire, competitions, musical styles, and instruments are framed within the context of carnival at-large. Anthony presents carnival, and the notable steel band happenings therein, in a year-by-year format from 1839 to 1989. This provides a useful chronology of names, dates, and figures. The
1981 panorama competition, a specific part of carnival, receives attention from Jeffery Bush (1981). He briefly explains the logistical specifics of the event and bands.

The history of specific steel bands and pannists has been another popular academic topic. The Renegades Steel Orchestra is the subject of the first major publication dedicated to one band (Bellour, Chock, Johnson, & Riggio, 2002). Full of colorful photographs, the authors first provide a history of the Renegades (prominent individuals and events) before discussing contemporary issues such as international tours and gender. Not surprisingly, oral histories are utilized because of the steel drum’s recent invention. Similarly, Ron Kerns and Shelly Irvine (1992) and Sarah Miller and Tom Miller (1997) have interviewed Ray Holman to recount his involvement in steel band history. Holman’s contributions include the first original composition for Panorama and the bass section soli in such compositions. Interviews with Cliff Alexis have been published three times in Percussive Notes. Al O’Connor (1981) discusses pan music styles with Alexis, and Robert Chappell (1987) relays Alexis’ pan background and thoughts on pan in the United States. Rick Holly (1995) asks Alexis and Liam Teague to discuss pan construction, compositions and education in Trinidad and the United States. Completing the trinity of influential pannists from Northern Illinois University, Jeannine Remy’s (1994) interview with the band’s founder, Al O’Connor, provides insight into the foundation of the first U.S. university steel band, and O’Connor’s relationship with Trinidadian pan.

Some of the influences of Ellie Mannette and Andy Narell can be gleaned from Percussive Notes interviews. Gary Gibson (1986) questions Mannette on his personal involvement in the history of the steel drum instrument, and his reasons for immigrating to the United States. Kaethe George (1990) spoke with Mannette about his views on, and involvement with, pan education: how did he get started in the U.S. and what are his thoughts on the future of
the instrument? Correspondingly, Mannette’s former students, Jeff and Andy Narell, were interviewed by Larry Snider (1986), imparting their experiences with pan in the U.S.: how did they get started, what do they think of pan’s future in the U.S.? Susan Jette (1991) further explores Andy Narell’s personal involvement in the pan movement. In this interview, Narell explains how and why he has pioneered pan in jazz settings and as a solo instrument, as well as his reception by Trinidadians.

Myrna Nurse explores an assortment of Trinidadian and U.S. pan personalities in her 2007 text, *Unheard Voices*. Each chapter is devoted to a different individual and Nurse has developed a narrative based on interviews with each person. Some narratives focus on the individual’s historical involvement, while others tackle the individual’s viewpoint on a particular subject, such as the introduction of modern technology into the process of instrument crafting.


My examination of the history of pan in the Midwestern region of the United States confirmed the importance of both Trinidadian and non-Trinidadian musicians and educators in the dissemination of pan. In the Midwest, the overwhelming majority of pan musicians and educators have no direct ties to the musical cultures of Trinidad or the Caribbean, yet school supported pan programs are continually established.

**Dispersion**

A survey of steel drum programs in North American schools was published in *Percussive Notes* in 1981 (O’Connor 1981). At that time, six collegiate and seven public schools were
identified as having steel band programs. After nine years, another survey (Remy 1990) was conducted that recognized 26 instrument craftsmen who had built and tuned instruments in the United States, as well as 38 active university steel bands, 16 elementary and 21 high school bands, and 66 professional/community steel bands; the substantial national growth is noteworthy. Studies focused on specific regions and states in the U.S. have also been conducted. Lawrence App penned an exceptionally in-depth study of pan in 1997, in which he explored steel band activity in Florida in terms of commercialization and commodification. He discusses how and why pan has moved to different regions of Florida in relation to venues, audiences, and technology. After World War II, Miami became a major hub for Caribbean cruises, and Caribbean imagery and culture began to permeate Florida. This established a vital connection between pan, the idea of a tropical paradise, and Florida as a stateside vacation spot.

Although the steel drum was invented in Trinidad, West Indian immigrants brought pan to the U.S. no later than 1949 - three years after its modern 55-gallon incarnation. Therefore, it is valuable to consider pan in the U.S. of its own accord, and not only as a manifestation of Trinidad, the West Indies, or the Caribbean. Limiting the geographic locale of steel pan studies is both misleading and problematic because this potentially restricts theoretical perspectives (Appadurai 1986) to those already commonly associated with that locale. By exploring pan activity in locations beyond its point of origin, I aim to shift the loci of theoretical examination. In this dissertation, I approach the study of pan as it has been manifest in various post-secondary music programs throughout the United States. Rather than dwelling on place as a marker of significance for pan, I highlight the contributions of key individuals who have shaped the development of steel band as an intercultural and subcultural activity. Recognizing that the world no longer consists of mostly isolated cultural groups (Slobin 1992), new frameworks for
analyzing new forms of human and musical relationships are needed. Slobin proposes the term “subculture” as embedded or smaller units within larger music super-cultures. This term is useful for studying steel band activity in post-secondary institutions in the United States, which constitutes a limited, although significant, portion of pan activity in the U.S. and globally, because each institution exhibits its own approaches to pedagogy, repertoire, musicultural history, tropicalism, and ultimately, legitimacy. Slobin also develops the term “interculture” as ‘culture’ that is no longer easily enclosed in a single location; all are a part of a multicultural mosaic that spreads regardless of geo-political borders. Indeed, while some pan programs remain isolated in their activities, many have historical and regular connections with other pan programs and pannists, fostering a fluid and constant exchange of ideas, information, and stories.

Biography

The history of steel drums is a product of human activity and, as such, biographies of noteworthy people and programs will receive critical attention in this dissertation. Interview transcriptions provide useful source material. A plethora of biographies have been published within the subject of music (Cooper 1995, Cruz & Reymundo 2004, Kernodle 2004); however, no comprehensive biographies of individuals involved in the development and performance of steel drums have been published.

Biographical work (Gittings 1978) requires the biographer to explore the subject’s humanity, reputation, achievements, shortcomings, and external influences. Gittings notes that certain complications arise when the biographical subject is deceased. For example, the biographer cannot directly ask questions of the subject. He cautions that although technological advances have made research documents more available, writers must remain skeptical of
resource reliability. Fortunately, in the realm of pan, several of the pioneering builders and composers are still living, which allows the use of oral history to produce written biographies. However, testimonies from interviewees, particularly ones with an obvious concern for their legacy, pose their own challenges involving resource reliability. Pachter (1985) notes that biography is not a list of facts, but the story of personal struggle. It is a medium for understanding not just an individual, but also a point in history. The telling of oral history requires mindful listening and can prompt analytical self-reflection. Leon Edel (1984) similarly notes a relationship between the biographer and reflexivity: biographers should know themselves to know others. Recognizing the imperfect nature of biography, Edel makes it clear that biographers must attempt a reasonable resemblance of the lives they narrate. He states that an understanding of human behavior, through an understanding of anthropology, gives strength to the work. Biographical works need not be chronological, nor detail every aspect of the individual’s life, rather, many biographies focus on a particular aspect of the individual (McClendon 1974), as I intend to do regarding Ellie Mannette and his shaping of U.S. university pan programs. Chapter 3 discusses Mannette’s history with, and influence over, various pan programs within the U.S. academic system, educational workshops he has fostered, craftsmen and educators he has trained, and ultimately endeavors to shape the reader’s understanding of his personality through illustrations of his idiosyncrasies.

Although no full-length biographical works about pioneering steelbandsmen exist, there is precedence for biographies on pannists. Kelvin Hart, Edgar “Junior” Pouchet, and Othello Molineaux have been discussed as professional panmen in App’s dissertation. Each migrated from Trinidad to Florida, and utilized pan to suit their particular musical opportunities – various gigs, a regular Disney job, and jazz performances, respectively. Several biographical sketches of
pannerists have also been published in *Percussive Notes* since 1981. Cliff Alexis (Chappell 1987, Chappell 1997, O’Connor 1981), Ellie Mannette (George 1990, George 1996, Gibson 1986, Rogers 2003), Jeff Narell (Snider 1986), Andy Narell (Jette 1991, Snider 1986), Ray Holman (Kerns and Irvine 1992, Smith and Miller 1997), G. Allan O’Connor (Remy 1994), Liam Teague (Weiss 2000), and Roy Geddes (Waters 2003) have all received biographical attention, and contributed their thoughts on the then-current state of pan. From these biographical sketches, I will extract background information on Mannette to provide a foundation for my own work.

**Organology**

The organology of pan is significant to this study largely due to my focus on pan craftsman Ellie Mannette. Since his arrival in the United States, Mannette has interacted, with and built pans for, hundreds of people and programs. The people and circumstances Mannette has encountered in the U.S. have helped facilitate advancements in his instrument crafting processes (George 1994). His permanent artist-in-residency at West Virginia University has allowed him to focus on craftsmanship, rather than traveling continuously and building instruments out of inconsistent raw materials and tools. During this time, Mannette invented an entirely different steel pan voice, the quaduet, which is a solo instrument (George 1997) that was created in part because of his involvement with U.S. pannists. Mannette is not the only noteworthy U.S. craftsman. Trinidadian builders/tuners Cliff Alexis (Chappell 1987, Holly 1995) and Kim Loy Wong (Seeger 1961) immigrated to the U.S., where their craft has also been shaped by their new surroundings. Alexis has built instruments for numerous educational institutions throughout the United States since moving to the Midwest (Minnesota and Illinois),
while Wong has remained primarily engaged with the West Indian diaspora community in New York City.

There is not a standard instrumentation for the steel band. However, there are instruments that are common to the United States. The lead pan, also called the tenor pan, typically provides the melody. The double tenor plays counter melody. Double second and guitar, also referred to as the cello, pans supply the harmonic support by ‘strumming’ polyrhythmic chord progressions, and the bass pans provide the bass line. Organological studies of particular steel drum voices have been conducted on the double tenor pans (Clarke 2006) and double second pans (Kalantarian 1998). The double tenor examination provides a useful development of the instrument, while the double second research is a civil engineering study of modal analysis.9 Both provide an in-depth perspective on one voice of the steel orchestra, musically and extra-musically. Within this dissertation, organology is primarily addressed via Mannette’s contributions as a craftsman in the U.S., providing resources for academic institutions, as well as his contributions to the education of several U.S. pan craftsmen.

**Repertoire and Compositional Technique**

Directors, composers, and scholars have authored several articles and theses examining steel band repertoire in the last few decades, many of which discuss the musical features of idiomatic steel band repertoire. Most steel band music consists of melody (high range), harmony (mid-range), and bass (low-range). Within this configuration, the middle voices carry the characteristic role of harmonic strumming (Gibson 1986), which is the syncopated, ostinato-based form of playing interlocking chords that drives the music forward. These general music characteristics are applied to the most popular styles played on steel drums – soca and calypso

---

9 The double second research studies the dynamic properties of structures under vibrational excitation.
Aside from the pans themselves, engine room instruments (non-pitched percussion used in the steel band) have common rhythmic patterns with slight stylistic variations, whereas the drum set patterns, in particular, vary greatly depending on musical style (Dudley 1996). Paul G. Ross discusses the use of the drum set in soca and calypso in his 1988 *Percussive Notes* article, “Drum Set in the Steel Band.” These writings include transcriptions of drum set parts and strumming patterns that are ubiquitous to the steel band.

Although soca and calypso music are very common styles in the steel band idiom, “repertoire is virtually boundless” (Tanner 2007:47). Panoramas and panorama-style pieces,\(^{10}\) Latin, jazz, pop/rock, classical, and original works are other styles common to steel band (Tanner 2000). Bomb tunes, so named for providing musical surprises, but stylistically significant for incorporating Western art and symphonic repertoire, are another important genre of pan works (Dudley 2002) that have found favor in U.S. post-secondary programs. Preserving stylistic differences is important (Walton 1996) to promoting musical diversity among musicians and audience members. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I discuss aspects of repertoire diversity and standardization of repertoire. Historical and musical perspectives on several of these styles can be found in David Walton’s doctoral treatise, “Music for Steel Band: An Examination of the Various Styles Which Develop Specific Performance Skills.”

In 1990, the year after the pan publishing industry commenced in the United States, Jeannine Remy noted “most directors arrange, transcribe and compose their own repertoire” (Remy 1990:19). For this reason, articles on arranging techniques can be found in a variety of percussion resources (Gibson 1986, Miller 1986, Miller 1997). Moreover, the compositional styles of pan composers Ray Holman, Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, Jit Samaroo, and Ken “Professor”

---

\(^{10}\) At present, panorama is the largest and most lauded steel band competition in Trinidad. Compositions for this competition consist of long, fast, and complex arrangements, learned by rote, typically based on popular calypsos and socas from that competition season, and utilize verse, chorus, jam, Latin, and modulating sections.
Philmore are discussed in academic resources (Remy 1991, Williams 2003). Today there are approximately ten viable publishing companies that enable directors, if they choose, to “rely exclusively on published arrangements” (Tanner 2000:23). This shift in the roles of directors from arranging and composing their own repertoire, to becoming increasingly dependent on today’s pan publishing companies, has moved U.S. pan repertoire in the direction of standardization, canonization, and legitimization.

**Education**

Instructional articles, treatises, and books have been written on how to establish a steel band and approach steel band pedagogy. The basics of ensemble size, notation use, appropriate musical styles (Miller 1986), arranging techniques (Miller 1997), repertoire, rehearsal techniques, personnel (Tanner 2000), instrument purchase, and performance (Tanner 2007) are some of the topics which have been addressed, and continue to be important as new bands are established. Repertoire (Tanner 2000, Tanner 2007, Walton 1996) and ‘rote vs. note’ (Chappell 1997, Guess 1998, Miller 1986, Morford 2007, Tiffe 2006, Walton 1996) are two of the more compelling issues that have been part of the discourse. While most educators find value in using both rote technique and notation to teach repertoire, one system is typically favored for logistical and practical reasons. In terms of repertoire, many educators advocate for a diverse repertoire (Tanner 2007), both stylistically and in terms of composers, to give students and audiences a broader musical exposure. However, some bands (Tiffe 2006) perform works by only a few composers or limit their styles of music to reflect “traditional” Trinidadian styles to remain more “authentic.”
Steel bands in U.S. universities are musically valued (Parks 1986) because they improve students’ rhythmic abilities, drum set and “ethnic” percussion skills, comprehensive music aptitude, and as a promotional recruitment ensemble. School-sponsored steel pan education in the United States precedes such a system in Trinidad (Gibson 1986) and has influenced the Trinidadian government to support their own school steel bands. The presence of pan in U.S. school systems has contributed to the overall legitimacy of the art form, domestically and abroad; the inclusion of pan within academia implies it is valid enough for systematic and intellectual support and study.

Methodology

The research design for this project consisted primarily of extensive, multi-site, ethnographic fieldwork, which relied on oral history and archival research conducted from 2003 to 2014. During the field research phase of this study, I observed rehearsals and performances of collegiate steel bands and I conducted in-depth interviews with U.S. pan pioneers, student musicians, directors, administrators, and instrument crafters. I collected audio, visual, and photographic documentation during fieldwork for analysis and archiving of information, stories, and historical materials.

As a pan player of nineteen years experience, I have performed in and directed ensembles including professional combos, three university bands, two community bands, Women in Steel from Brooklyn, New York, and the Invaders Steel Orchestra of Trinidad. My personal and professional contacts have provided me access to many of the noteworthy individuals in the U.S. steel band movement, including Ellie Mannette, Jeff and Andy Narell, Cliff Alexis, Liam Teague, Ray Holman, Tom Miller, and Robert Greenidge. Interactions and interviews with these
individuals have typically occurred at pan festivals and other performance-related gatherings, while some transpired amidst average school-day activities. Although each was very busy with teaching and logistics at such events, all have been accessible and willing to converse.

Interviews with Ellie Mannette were conducted during the week after the Mannette Steel Drum Festival of Steel in July 2008. Of all the aforementioned individuals, Mannette tends to be the most verbose. Whether giving a lecture, participating in an interview, or just in casual conversation, he is always willing to talk. As students at Miami University, we were discouraged from interrupting Mannette when he came to tune the university’s instruments – not because it was rude, but because he was so eager to talk to students about pan he would become distracted and disengage from his tuning work.

Ultimately, I intend to deposit my interview materials in a willing archive, as a resource for future U.S. pan researchers and historians. These materials include interviews with Mannette for this dissertation, as well as other interviews I have conducted for research projects outside of this dissertation with Ray Holman, Andy Narell, and a variety of student participants in collegiate and community steel bands. As an extension of this dissertation, I plan to do more research on pan activities at historically black colleges and universities as there is very little written regarding their histories and contributions to the overall U.S. pan movement. I am also interested in researching adult community steel bands as a means continuation education, and their impact on the aging brain and social inclusion; other non-Trinidadian pan diasporas within the Caribbean and outside of the Western hemisphere; and the uses of pan by mainstream media in the United States.
Chapter Outline

The dissertation is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. In this opening chapter, I have presented the theoretical frameworks of legitimacy, dissemination, and transformation as they shape the use of steel drums in U.S. collegiate environments. Chapter 2 establishes a historical perspective relative to the tropicalism, legitimization, dissemination, and transformation of pan activity in the United States. I discuss pan in specific university contexts in Chapter 3 with an exploration of Ellie Mannette’s influence on the U.S. pan movement in universities, students, and institutions. In Chapter 4, I further highlight the phenomenon of tropicalism, as it is manifest in mainstream U.S. musical, popular, and material culture, and its impact on the struggle for legitimacy in steel bands in and beyond academia. As well, Chapter 4 explores the integral role instrument crafters, publishing companies, festival organizations, and other non-collegiate entities have had in facilitating steel band activity in U.S. universities. Ellie Mannette is the focus of Chapter 5. The conclusion provides a general overview of the findings as they relate to steel band tropicalism, legitimacy, and dissemination, Ellie Mannette and universities, as well as a discussion of the historical and educational implications of this study.
CHAPTER 2
PAN COMES TO THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

The dispersion of pan activity throughout the United States has occurred polygenetically via networks of individuals, community organizations, educational institutions, and commercial interests. Arguably, the matrix of relationships between various institutions and individuals, including Ellie Mannette prominently on many of its axes, has informed the shape of the pan movement in the U.S. today. This chapter traces the development of the pan movement in the United States from its original migration from Trinidad to New York City and concludes with a discussion of its eventual connection to the culture of U.S. colleges and universities. The historical overview begins with a consideration of the impact of calypso music on American perceptions of West Indian cultural identities and then outlines the U.S. Navy Steel Band’s influence on the overall steel band movement. The contributions related to community-based pan activity and to the commodification of steel drum music in Florida made by pioneer Trinidadian immigrant Rudy King are also examined, as well as the impact of pan on West Indian immigrant communities in New York City. Finally, I introduce the story of Ellie Mannette and explore his role as an educational and craftsman mentor, both in the development of urban community bands and later through his direct and indirect involvement with collegiate programs.

Calypso Crazy United States

Calypso artists were recording in the U.S. as early as 1912 and around 1935 calypsonians began discussing North American topics in their songs (Hill 1998). Although the carnival season sustained calypso in Trinidad, New York City promoted calypsonians through recordings, radio
performances, and club appearances (Hill 1998: 76). The Andrews Sisters’ rendition of “Rum and Coca-Cola” was the first highly successful crossover hit featuring non-Trinidadian singers and it introduced millions of North Americans to calypso (Hill 1998: 86). Regrettably, as proven in a federal court case, Leo Feist, Inc., plagiarized “Rum and Coca-Cola.” In this case, the publishing company claimed that the composers were Morey Amsterdam, Jeri Sullivan, and Paul Baron, but the original composition, titled “L’Année Passée,” had been written in 1906 by Lionel Belasco, who had taken the melody from a Martiniquais folk song (Nizer 1961: 334-6). Nevertheless, the Andrews Sisters’ success foreshadowed the emergence of the man who would become the most influential calypso singer in U.S. history: Harry Belafonte.

In 1956, Harry Belafonte and RCA-Victor released *Calypso*, the first album ever to sell over one million copies. According to Allen and Slater (1998: 120-21), “Belafonte… introduced millions of non-West Indian listeners to stylized versions of calypsos and Caribbean folk songs.” Songs such as “Mary Ann,” “Yellow Bird,” “Day-O,” “Jamaica Farewell,” and “Brown Skin Girl” became widely known and Belafonte was dubbed the “King of Calypso.” His stylized adaptations of these tunes featured tamer lyrics sung in a quasi-American accent and lacked the overtly sexual double *entendre* often featured in Trinidadian calypsos of the time (e.g. “Rum and Coca-Cola” and “Jump in the Line”). Advertisements such as “The best calypso enunciation on the market!” and “…Gerald Clark and his Calypso Singers, currently holding forth at the Village Vanguard, are preparing a calypso glossary…” were utilized by publications like the *New York Sun* to attract bohemian New Yorkers to these calypso concerts, which helped to eliminate the “language barrier” that had impeded calypso’s crossover popular potential formerly (Hill 1998: 82-3).
The calypso craze peaked in 1957 when this music came to comprise 25% of all popular music recording sales in the United States.\textsuperscript{11} In the same year, Rudy King performed at the Apollo Theater with Harry Belafonte.\textsuperscript{12} Several pannists and their bands toured with Belafonte, including Reynolds “Caldera” Caraballo and his Trinidad Steelband, and Lawrence “Pops” McCarthy and his Harlem All Stars (Allen and Slater 1998:118-9). These bands helped solidify the association between pan and calypso for U.S. audiences and consumers, an association that continues to exist even today. The popularity and familiarity of pan music, particularly in connection with Belafonte’s repertoire, paved the way for success in one substantial vein of steel drum repertoire: the so-called island tunes, or island favorites. Curiously, Belafonte’s recordings did not feature steel drums in any significant capacity, even while his live performances of the late 1950s and early 1960s did. The use of pans may have been primarily symbolic, or was viewed as a gimmick rather than a legitimate musical component. Ray Allen and Les Slater note the influence of Belafonte and the convergence of cliché costumes on early commercial steel band groups:

The popularity of Belafonte’s recordings affected the repertories of steelbands seeking white patronage. Belafonte hits...along with calypso-tinged arrangements of American popular jazz standards became mainstays for bands playing at white parties and country clubs. These small, four-to-six player ensembles, appeared in colorful matching outfits, often with straw hats (121).

New York bands such as the Trinidad Serenaders occasionally featured sing-alongs and limbo dances to better entertain non-West Indian audiences (Allen and Slater 1998: 121).

These visual and musical performance components have not lost favor among many U.S. steel bands or their audiences even today. Just as a stereotype for blues singers has been modeled


after the Lomax family’s portrayal of Lead Belly,\textsuperscript{13} so too do clichés exist for steel pannists by way of this older calypso connection. Current expectations regarding repertoire and image stereotypes are still rooted in early- to mid-nineteenth century notions of exoticism. An “authentic” pannist plays “Yellow Bird” (made famous by Belafonte) while wearing a Polynesian shirt and Hawaiian \textit{lei} – at least to some audiences. And just as “Lead Belly was stymied by the tensions within the cult of authenticity…” (Filene 2000:75), so too are many modern pannists, when called to play gigs, asked to dress like pirates, or wear Hawaiian/Polynesian shirts and play “Jump in the Line” (again, made famous by Belafonte). Audience members may presume this music and appearance to be standard, but many musicians would not consider it “legitimate.” As observed by Trinidadian pannist and ethnomusicologist Mia Gormandy:

\begin{quote}
There are a lot of people in the U.S. […who]…associate the Caribbean with Hawaii when Hawaii isn’t in the Caribbean. Then that is also associated with a certain type of music that comes out very cheesy. All of this also ties into people assuming that the pan can only play one style of music, or one type of music. The Hawaiian shirts make that connection. That is why me [sic], as a pannist growing up in Trinidad, and coming to the U.S. and realizing that people have that idea in their head, you’re like, “No! We’re not wearing Hawaiian shirts because the steelpan is a real instrument!”\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

These longstanding stereotypes still hold in contemporary times.

Tropicalism can be realized in several ways regarding the calypso craze. First, the postcolonial cultural and economic hegemony that the U.S. recording industry wielded over the calypso craze, by way of American singers such the Andrews Sisters and Harry Belafonte, monopolized the U.S. market for calypso music and seriously excluded calypsonians from

\textsuperscript{13} Lead Belly was promoted as a singing convict whose voice freed him from jail. The Lomaxes dressed Lead Belly in prison clothing for promotional materials.

\textsuperscript{14} Mia Gormandy, personal interview, September 4, 2012.
Trinidad. Belafonte’s rise in popularity was in major part due to his essentializing of “island culture.” His songs were simplistic, escapist, exotic, non-threatening, and stylized for American/English language aesthetics. Such essentialism was passed down from Belafonte to early Trinidadian pannists in the U.S. like Caraballo and his Trinidad Steelband. Although the musicians recognized the stereotypes, they were complicit with them for personal and professional reasons, including financial gain, a desire to spread their culture no matter how cliché, and perhaps a goal of escaping Trinidad during the political upheaval which led to the country’s independence. These motivations are similar to those noted by Garrett in writing about the popularity of stylized Hawaiian music in the U.S. (2008), as well as Lead Belly’s decision to wear a prison uniform while performing the blues after his release from jail. Ultimately, the essentialized stereotypes initially promoted in the early days of calypso and pan in the U.S. have been reproduced for decades with limited divergence, in part for the financial gain of all who have benefitted from it via performances and recordings, and they continue to dictate today’s understandings and uses of these musics on many levels and in profound ways.

**Immigration of Pan Culture**

Rudolph Carter, better known as Rudy King, is widely thought to have been the first person to bring steel pan to the United States from Trinidad. He migrated from Trinidad to New York City in 1949 and established a career as a pan builder, tuner, and performer. King’s contributions to the U.S. pan movement mainly affected the New York City area: he competed and performed on pan at Harlem’s Apollo theatre, performed at Columbia University, formed a

---

15 On November 21, 2002, the non-profit organization City Lore inducted Rudy King into their People’s Hall of Fame for his 1949 introduction of the steel pan.
group known as the Trinidad Steelband, and remained active in the West Indian community of New York until his passing on March 18, 2004. King also helped to expand pan activity beyond New York by performing in places like the Blue Angels Club in Chicago and in various venues throughout Texas, Oklahoma, the Carolinas, and in Canada.

Although King may not have had a direct impact on the foundation of any collegiate steel bands in the United States, it is important to acknowledge him as the first Trinidadian pannist known to have brought the instrument to the country, which helped to initiate its transnational popularity. Moreover, given that King spent four months living and performing in Chicago in the mid-1950s, it may be speculated that he influenced the development of pan culture in that area as well as in New York.

**New York City: Steel Pan, Community, and Caribbean Identity in Diaspora**

As previously discussed, New York City has been a major destination for Trinidadian and other West Indian immigrants to the United States. From the time of Rudy King forward, steel band music has functioned as a source of pride, identity, and nostalgia in New York; pan culture has united diverse Caribbean expatriates in the city and provided economic and social gain for participants. In terms of identity and economy, the wide appeal of Harry Belafonte’s calypso hits

16 By the 1960s, King’s steel orchestra consisted of approximately twenty players and changed their name to the Tropicans. Today the band goes by Moods Pan Groove, and won both the first and second annual Panorama competition held behind the Brooklyn Museum, surpassing approximately seven other steel bands.


18 King worked with calypsonian Sam Manning and met calypsonian Mighty Charmer (Louis Farrakhan) at the Blue Angels.


20 Ibid.
among white audiences helped shape steel band repertoire for these same audiences. Trinidadian steel bands in New York have typically maintained two contrasting repertories: the Belafonte-stylized calypso music and otherwise American standards preferred by white audiences, on the one hand, and the imported Trinidadian carnival favorites preferred by expatriate Trinidadians and other West Indians, on the other.  

Steel pan music was not developed in an isolated atmosphere and Trinidadian musicians commonly traveled between their homeland and New York City, contributing to an active and fluid exchange of music, ideas, and culture. However, the stagnant Belafonte-themed repertoire they played for white audiences aggrieved some West Indian musicians, as they felt that they were compelled for financial reasons to perpetrate “exotic” stereotypes by wearing colorful costumes, white pants, and straw hats.  

Music promoters such as Village Gate owner Art D’Lugoff “…viewed steelband music as an island novelty with great crossover and commercial appeal. The Village Gate, a club which catered to a predominantly white, arty crowd, was one of the first important night spots to feature live steelband music…” (Allen and Slater 1998:122). Regardless of the level of legitimacy, these performance engagements provided economic opportunities for musicians and their promoters, and musical and social amusement for paying audiences.

Non-Trinidadian West Indians such as Barbadians, Grenadians, and Bahamians, as well as black Americans, quickly became involved with steel band activities in New York City. Numerous people joined bands for financial gain, while others sought to unite with other West Indians in their new environment. A major venue for pride, nostalgia, and unity is presently

---

21 As in Florida, New York City pan players employed musical adaptation and flexible performances strategies to accommodate their new, American listeners.

22 Repertoire and apparel stereotypes of this kind are still very common today for pannists hired to perform at private parties.

23 In Harlem, a number of black Americans became members of Lawrence “Pops” McCarthy’s band, the Harlem All Stars. McCarthy’s band performed at Harlem clubs and parties, the Village Gate, and toured with Harry Belafonte.
found within events hosted by the West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA). The roots of WIADCA are contained in the Harlem Carnival parade. Established in 1947 by Trinidadian immigrants, this parade attempted to recreate Trinidad carnival with masquerade (mas) bands, but fell short because it was too strictly organized to properly mimic the reckless abandon of carnival (Allen and Slater 1998:123). In the 1960s, the parade was moved to Brooklyn, where it continues to exist in a format truer to its Trinidadian roots than its Harlem predecessor. Although most Afro-Caribbean New Yorkers come from nations with no Carnival tradition, according to Philip Kasinitz, “The importance of Carnival lies in the fact that it is unquestionably ‘ethnic’ in form—that is[,] it asserts a distinct cultural heritage…[I]n New York, Carnival continually vacillates between its Trinidadian roots and its pan-Caribbean agenda” (1998:101-2). Or as sung by the Mighty Sparrow:

You can be from St. Cleo, or from John John,  
in New York, all that done.  
They haven’t to know who is who,  
New York equalize you.  
Bajan, Grenadian, Jamaican, “toute monde,”  
drinking they rum, beating they bottle and spoon.  
Nobody could watch me and honestly say,  
they don’t like to be in Brooklyn on Labor Day! (Kasinitz 1998:101)

The popularity of Panorama in Trinidad inspired such a competition to take shape in Brooklyn preceding the 1973 Labor Day Carnival (Allen and Slater 1998:125). Over the years, West Indians immigrants, along with people of West Indian descent who were born in the United States, black New Yorkers, and some white pannists, have participated in Labor Day Panorama festivities. So far these events have served to unite, not to divide or cause problems for, West Indians immigrants and citizens of the United States. As pan proliferated, gained acceptance, and was adapted by non-Trinidadians in the Caribbean and beyond, many Trinidadians came to take pride in its widespread appeal. Steven Stuempfle asserts that the “open and inclusive” (Stuempfle
musical sensibility of pannists stems from their cultural milieu, and the rich cultural traditions included within the instrument’s development.

In the New York City Trinidadian and West Indian musicultural diaspora, we again see examples of the kinds of personal and professional negotiations that musicians undertook in their new surroundings as they navigated between their lived experiences back home and their new realities in the United States. The tropicalism-driven demands of white audiences that emerged and grew by way of Belafonte songs and other “island favorites” led many musicians to choose to compromise their art for financial benefit. Moreover, the adaptation of carnival celebrations in Harlem demonstrated what America was by identifying what it was not: it was not the disorganized reckless abandon of Trinidadian-style carnival (Garrett 2008). By applying these hegemonic pressures to carnival in NYC, the American ideology of orderliness has been upheld while any perceived threat from immigrants became effectively neutralized. Nevertheless, the musiculture of Trinidad was expanding transnationally, not only among white Americans, but among black Americans and a variety of other West Indian immigrants in New York City.

The United States Navy Steel Band

In 1941, the United States signed a 99-year lease agreement with Britain for a large tract of land in Chaguaramas (Grissom 2000:10), which is located on the northwest point of Trinidad. The land was used as a military base for the United States Navy during World War II and, by the 1950s, thousands of empty 55-gallon oil and gasoline barrels had been stockpiled. During a 1956 inspection tour of military bases in the Caribbean, supervisor Admiral Dan Gallery claimed he was “shook up” by the music he heard accompanying Trinidadian carnival and, when he returned to Puerto Rico, he asked his Navy Bandmaster, Chief Musician Charlie Roeper, if the Navy Band
could reproduce steel band music on their Puerto Rican base. Roeper said he did not think it probable, but in the spring of 1956 Roeper and his men went to Trinidad to learn how to play pan.

The Navy Band stayed at the Chaguaramas base when formally learning to play pan, but spent much of the day lounging in Ellie Mannette’s backyard. Mannette built the first pans for the band and, in exchange, he received empty oil barrels for crafting his own instruments. Mannette and his band, the Esso Steel Band, gave the Navy Steel Band their first lessons. Once the Navy panmen returned to Puerto Rico, Mannette traveled there on several occasions to build instruments and teach. After a few months, the Navy Steel Band played engagements with a repertoire that included Trinidadian and American popular songs, Western art music, American standards, and traditional Puerto Rican, South American, and Caribbean songs. Patriotic favorites such as “Stars and Stripes,” were arranged in various Caribbean styles, including merengue, calypso, and cha-cha-chá. Within a year the band learned enough tunes to record their first album, Pandemonia, and played for thousands at the 1957 World Fair in Brussels, Belgium.

As explained by Franz Grissom, former Chief Musician and Director of the United States Navy Steel Band, the Navy Steel Band had a variety of visible public performances:

The Navy Steel Band's major contribution in the early years was through notable television appearances (Ed Sullivan Show, Bob Hope Show, Today Show) and performances at many major military bases attended by both military and non-military public. The band started playing

24 “Admiral Dan” Gallery (Admiral D.V. Gallery) introduced Little League baseball to Puerto Rico. He also fostered a friendship with Harry Belafonte.

25 Prior to this agreement, panmen were stealing oil barrels from the naval base.

26 The band was sponsored by the Esso Oil Company. Many steel bands gained corporate sponsorship by the 1960s, which provided bands with money, and sometimes organizational and behavioral restrictions.
in the U.S. in 1956, and the first engagements were the Ed Sullivan Show, St. Albens Hospital in New York, and the White House (2000:12).

Throughout its tenure, the Navy Steel Band performed for numerous presidents, heads of state, admirals, generals, and senators. They played in Hawai’i for two weeks when Hawai’i attained statehood in 1959, and toured throughout South America for five weeks in connection with President Eisenhower’s goodwill “People-to-People Program” (Nurse 2007:174). During the New York World's Fair in 1964, Chief Musician Roeper met Murray Narell and his children, who had come to hear the Navy Steel Band play. Later, members of the Navy band traveled to Queens to listen to Narell’s group. Over the years, band members assembled a repertoire book that contained fifty to sixty arrangements for performance. They developed a “lead sheet” performance system whereby leads and double seconds would alternate the melody, while other instruments provided chord accompaniment and a bass line. Reportedly, the Navy Steel Band was the first steel band to read, write, and perform arrangements specifically for steel band. As well, they were the first to be comprised of an all-American membership (Nurse 2007:178). In 1972, the Navy Steel Band moved from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to its permanent location in New Orleans, Louisiana, until ultimately disbanding in 1999.

The common practice of military bands touring and performing in the U.S. gave several communities direct access to steel band music, imagery, and aesthetics. Kansas native Gary Gibson, who is now an internationally known pan artist, recounts how the U.S. Navy Steel Band affected him as a child:

> When I was eight years old, I went to a parade in downtown Wichita. At the time (1968), the U.S. Navy had a steel drum band that toured around the country playing for parades and school assembly concerts and so forth (recruitment tool, I guess). I saw them at the parade, and was so awed by

---

27 His children were both literally Murray’s sons Jeff and Andy Narell, as well as the neighborhood children who comprised the steel band he worked with as a social worker.
the instrument. Back then, we had round “disk” type snow sleds made out of steel […] You can see where this is going…

When we got home from the parade, I grabbed my steel sled, and took my dad’s hammer to it. I got four notes: C, F, A, and the octave C. With these four notes, I could play “Taps” and “Reveille” and so forth. I had a little rope tied to the [sledding] straps so that I could wear it around my neck like the Navy band guys did. I distinctly remember being out on my back porch, drumsticks in hand, proudly banging out these tunes.

I had completely blacked this event out in my memory until only about four years ago, when I was filling out a bio questionnaire for a press release. The realization that I had been interested in pan at the age of 8 was a revelation for me, and really helped complete the whole picture of my relationship with the instrument, which I had previously thought only existed since college.28

The Navy Steel Band members’ appearance was identifiably American, specifically with respect to members’ manner of dress, body language, American accents, and style of music presentation, and this factored predominantly in U.S. audience acceptance of, and interest in, steel band music during the 1960s. At a time when race was a central issue with regard to civil rights in the U.S., the all-Caucasian Navy Steel Band playing Trinidadian instruments and styles represented a complex relationship between music and race. In retrospect Grissom has noted, “…in our enthusiasm for [s]teelband, we probably didn’t project the highest quality [s]teelband image. We were all [w]hite men playing our renditions of calypso music on instruments that were fairly inadequate by today’s standard of [p]an. People seeing us on TV may not have been impressed. While we meant well, we could have set back the movement a few years” (Nurse 2007:174). Grissom is alluding to the notion that their white, American versions of pan music were not legitimate, at least not from his retrospective viewpoint, and in fact may have had negative implications for the future of pan in the United States. Nevertheless, under these conditions U.S. citizens were able to absorb the steel band on their own terms and without the

28 Gary Gibson, e-mail message to author, September 19, 2002.
complexities of considering a multitude of racial, colonial, and historical concerns – both from Trinidadian culture and within their own culture.

Within the context of tropicalism, we can view the Navy Steel Band as a force for subordinating, hegemonizing, and marginalizing the Trinidadian steel band as pan found a new home in the United States. The land granted to the U.S. military during WWII allowed the U.S. to control more than physical property; it ultimately enabled U.S. naval musicians to steer Americans’ perceptions of steel bands, and steelbandsmen, by way of their own tours across the U.S. and numerous national television appearances. Moreover, as the first steel band to read and write arrangements for pan, the Navy band pushed the steel band movement toward the Western norm of written notation. Compared to musicians reading “sophisticated music notation” in military uniforms, Trinidadian pannists, through the epistemological lens of tropicalism, would have appeared quaint. Quaintness equates with weakness and “justifies” the need for “our help,” musiculturally or militarily. However, this “virtuous help” is typically driven by opportunistic desires of the more empowered to gain economic, strategic, or political advantage at the expense of the integrity of the Other. Viewed relative to such an interpretation, the birth of the modern steelpan may be seen as ultimately having been situated within the context of larger military and geo-political frameworks, and those frameworks continue to define the social, cultural, musical, and political conditions of pan both in Trinidad and in the U.S. even today.

The phenomenon of an instrument or type of music becoming more widely accepted abroad than at “home,” is not limited to the pan. As mentioned, pan came to the U.S. largely without the unfavorable associations with members of the lower socio-economic class, with the badjohns and “vagabonds” of Trinidadian panman culture. Likewise, German composer Herbert Eimert felt Americans’ inexperience listening to 20th-century art music made them more open to
experimentation, suggesting “that America adopted European culture without adopting its prejudices, and that Germans could benefit from listening with more innocent ‘American’ ears” (Beal 2006:57). Moreover, the embracing of a domestic music by foreign nation can influence that native musiculture to re-examine its own music and use of that music. Indeed, the acceptance of steelpan in the U.S. resulted in Trinidadians and the Trinidadian government to reconsider the use of pans in schools and as a symbol of national pride. This type of welcome from abroad and reconsideration at home is akin to the 1960s folk and blues revival in the United Staes. Thanks to British enthusiasm for American folk and blues music, people in the U.S. gained a new appreciation and affection for their own music in the 1960s.

The relatively short history of pan during a period of globalization has facilitated numerous out-of-context experiences, and therefore an easy association of pan with a multitude of other cultures. Conversely, for those individuals in the U.S. who seek more “authentic” experiences of cultural diversity, these re-presentations may seem deceptive, illegitimate, and inauthentic. The amalgamation of these depictions, however, plus many others, has resulted in the U.S. steel band movement becoming a force of its own.

Ellie Mannette Comes to the United States

Through his work with the Navy Steel Band, Ellie Mannette became involved with the steel band movement in the United States from its inception. One of his most significant contributions to American pan began when Murray Narell brought Mannette to New York City in 1967 (George 1990:34). Upon his arrival in the United States, he began working with Kim Loy Wong, Vincent Taylor, Ansell Joseph, Vincent Hernandez, Rudy King, and Rudolph Charles, who collectively comprised an early 1970s group of Trinidadian entrepreneurs known
as the University Settlement (George 1994:31-4). Using the basement of a community center, these panmen built instruments and taught others to play pan. Mannette worked with inner city community groups for about five years and founded over a dozen bands. One of his community groups, the Blandettes, performed at Queens College, where officials from the New York City Board of Education asked him to attain certification so he could work within the public school system. Following this performance, he started several school bands throughout New York City (Gibson 1986:37). Around this same time, in 1968, Mannette also began his work with collegiate steel programs, the first at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Ellie Mannette and Steel Pan in American Music Education: The Calliope’s Children Band

Another musician who crossed paths with Ellie Mannette was James “Jimmy” Leyden. After World War II, Leyden decided to leave the business of studio recording, television, and composing jingles for commercials to teach music in his hometown of Chappaqua, New York. He had first experienced steel drums in 1957 when vacationing in Tobago and, as he began his teaching appointment in 1971, Leyden heard a National Geographic album of Trinidadian music and was reminded of pan. Subsequently, he asked the principal at his school for five hundred dollars to purchase steel drums and he bought pans from New York drum supplier, Carrol Drum Service. When they arrived, the pitches on the instruments were not tuned to A-440, which created a serious problem for Leyden as he attempted to integrate these instruments into his concert band. After complaining to the Carrol Drum Service, he was introduced to Mannette.

29 Trinidadian Kim Loy Wong and legendary folk singer Pete Seeger brought pan to national attention in the U.S. in 1965 through recordings and on Seeger’s television show Rainbow Quest (Season 1, Episode 37). Rudolph Charles was the leader of the Trinidadian Desperadoes Steel Orchestra, and was also the acknowledged inventor of the quadrophonics and 4-cello pans.

30 The musical tone “A” vibrating at the frequency of 440 Hertz is the standard American tuning.
Leyden politely informed Mannette, who tuned instruments by ear, that the drums were not tuned to concert pitch. At this time, craftsmen used the chromatic pitch pipe to tune pans. Leyden then introduced Mannette to the stroboscopic tuner. Leyden and Mannette worked together closely for several years and, when the University Settlement sponsorship fell apart, Mannette and Leyden received some of the beat-up pans that were no longer in use. When Leyden’s steel band performed at the Music Educators National Conference New York State Convention in 1974, other educators saw the Horace Greeley High School Steel Band (named Calliope’s Children Steel Orchestra) and subsequently approached their own school boards for funding to support similar ensembles, which generated orders for Mannette instruments from New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Calliope’s Children continued publicizing pan throughout the 1970s, performing for St. Croix’s carnival and touring Romania, Russia, and Poland (Nurse 2007:183).

Upon graduation, a few of Leyden’s students started one of the first collegiate steel bands at Oberlin College as part of a program known as the Experimental College. This was in 1980. The Experimental College, or Ex-Co, allowed students to teach other students in credited courses. Oberlin students and Calliope’s Children alumni Peter Mayer, Mike Geller, and Toby Gordon brought pans from their high school band and Leyden contributed sheet music from the Chappaqua High School music library. With “CC” already painted on the instruments from Calliope’s Children and no money to repaint them, the Oberlin band was named the Can

31 Grissom claims Navy Band pannist Hugo Bailey to be the first to tune to a strobe tuner. Bailey learned to tune pans from Mannette while living in Trinidad. (Nurse 2007: 177).

32 Shannon Dudley, e-mail message to author, September 5, 2002.
Consortium. Initially the group went unrecognized by the university as a legitimate performance group, although conservatory percussion professor Michael Rosen gave them permission to store instruments and rehearse at the conservatory until they acquired another space on campus. American ethnomusicologist and Trinidadian music specialist Shannon Dudley was a member of this original Oberlin band – a fact which he has cited as his most important college experience, as it opened up a new world of music to him, one that would ultimately come to define his career. The steel band gave him a chance to arrange, improvise, perform for dancing, and experience a new repertoire of Afro-Caribbean music. In 1984, after graduation, Dudley moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, to learn from Cliff Alexis how to sink drums. To sink a drum, the instrument craftsman uses a sledgehammer, air hammer, shot put, or otherwise heavy object to pound the flat top of a 55-gallon oil barrel into a concave form. Dudley had initially met Alexis at a pan-tuning workshop at the University of Akron around 1981 or 1982. From that point forward, Dudley went on to graduate studies in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Berkeley, and ultimately to a professorship in ethnomusicology at the University of Washington, where his published works (1996, 1997, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2008) have centered principally on steel band music and traditions of Trinidad and Tobago.

During his early days in the U.S., Ellie Mannette towed a line between tropicalism and legitimacy. By capitalizing on Americans’ interests in the exotic, and in tropical paradise fantasies in particular, he gradually worked his way into the very types of institutions that ostensibly eschewed “frivolity” and defined cultural legitimacy: educational institutions—first

---

33 In 2001, the band changed their name to Oberlin Steel as associating the instruments with cans was considered derogatory.

34 Shannon Dudley, email message to author, September 26, 2002.

35 Sinking a barrel is the first step of building a steel drum.
public schools and eventually colleges and universities. By advocating on behalf of the institutionalization of the pan in categorically legitimizing institutions, universities most of all, Mannette contributed immeasurably to the instrument’s ascent within the ranks of “legit” musical culture. He altered his own craftsmanship practices to absorb the American tuning system based on A-440 as a means of spreading his personal ideological perspective on instrument building, providing material goods (pans) to schools in the U.S., promoting his philosophy that steel drums should be incorporated into Western classical music (and vice versa), and extending his individual legacy. Although the Western harmonic system required Mannette to change his practices to suit a new authority, ultimately he has furthered his own heritage by effectively promoting pan to educational institutions that continue to carry on his work to this day.

Conclusion

The complete account of pan in the United States is much more than the sum of its university parts, but that larger story is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nevertheless, it is imperative to mention some of the means through which Trinidadian culture, music, and specifically pan first came to the U.S., gained favor, and was to be utilized for education and entertainment in a diversity of contexts and settings. Pan progress in the United States is a product of multiple and often intersecting individuals, institutions, and cultural value systems. The calypso craze of the 1940s and 1950s set a precedent for repertoires, manners of dress, and the lilting styles of so-called island tunes. Indeed, many of these early characteristics are still embraced by contemporary U.S. pannists and audiences when their use is considered authentic and legitimizing. As the modern steelpan is relatively new, dating back to 1946, it does not have
hundreds of years of Trinidadian history for a musicultural foundation. At this time, worldwide communication, travel, and globalization were on the rise, leading to the rapid spread of pan outside of Trinidad. The Navy Steel Band traveled across the U.S., perhaps more readily accepted by Americans struggling with the idea of racial equality. Conversely, the Navy Steel Band may have been received primarily as a novelty; novelty is a pan stereotype still opposed by pannists today.

As panmen brought their art from Trinidad they straddled two worlds for two different audiences, using pan as a form of remembrance, point of interaction, commodity, cultural icon, and educational tool. During its foundational days in the U.S., pan’s repertoire and use depended significantly on whether the pannist and the listener were Americans or West Indians, as each commonly preferred familiar music he or she considered enjoyable and perhaps authentic. An authentic steel band implied a legitimate steel band, and for an instrument often considered a novelty, legitimacy was – and still is – a point of contention for the steelpan art form. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, tropicalism and legitimacy took new forms as pan became a noteworthy ensemble at many U.S. universities.
CHAPTER 3
A HISTORY OF PAN IN U.S. UNIVERSITIES

Introduction

Over the years it has become commonplace for certain scholars and musicians\(^{36}\) (Levin 1996:11-12) to criticize academia as plastic, uncreative, and inorganic. Does the mere existence of pan in universities de-legitimize its ability to exist in the “real world”? Judah Cohen addresses this issue in an article titled, “Music Institutions and the Transmission of Tradition,” in which he notes that, while music institutions tend to represent modernity and Westernization, and “…non-institutionalized musical traditions tend to receive emphasis as sites of greater purity…the relationship music institutions hold with the musical traditions they propagate may be far more complicated…institutions may serve as hidden traditions themselves…” (2009:308). Although Cohen’s work focuses on the differences between Jewish cantorial schools and non-institutionalized cantorial education, there are connections between his research and the history of pan in U.S. universities. Ellie Mannette is an exemplary example of the complex relationship between music institutions and non-institutionalized music traditions as a culture bearer who has spent the better part of his career working within educational settings, but remaining a craftsman and a panman, rather than becoming an academic. Within approximately a year of his arrival he began working with collegiate programs, which he considers to have been very important to the widespread acceptance and legitimization of the steelpan. He has imparted his viewpoints to many of his students over the course of his life, both as a craftsman and as a culture bearer. This chapter focuses on Mannette’s career within the contexts of universities and other educational...

institutions, and within the larger context of the history of steel bands in American collegiate institutions.

**Coming to the United States**

As noted in chapter two, Ellie Mannette became involved with the steel band movement in the United States by way of the Navy Steel Band, and ultimately began working with inner city community groups in New York City. “That is really how I got started. I came in 1961 with the Navy first. I came back in 1967. I started working in NYC and the Narells and stayed in their home. We started building drums for inner city groups [in] Harlem, Bronx, Bedford-Sty, Highbridge Garden, 3rd Ave. L, and Bland Community.” Eventually he began working with school groups after attaining the necessary certification. Mannette’s first school group was at Public School 41 in Brooklyn, followed by PS36 in the Bronx.

Working in the inner city was extremely difficult. These kids would just be called in off the street, from Harlem or wherever. They were abusive and give [sic] you a hard time to get started. It would be like a bunch of little animals in the band room, running and knocking down the drums, throwing things at each other. You’d be trying to get them to settle down to practice, “Come on! Let’s practice!” and they’d be saying, “Don’t shout at me, Mr. Mannette! Don’t shout at me!” but I never gave up…I had a very rough time in NYC for 15 years. People would slam doors in my face. I would try to sell people [on the instrument], and they would ask “Who are you?” “I’m Ellie Mannette. I’ve been working on developing this instrument in the area for two years.” And they slam the door in your face. It was a rough deal for me to succeed. That’s why I tell young people, “Don’t ever give up. The more doors slam in your face, the harder you should work.” You become stronger, mentally, physically, ambition. You build a resistant system.

Also as previously mentioned, Mannette’s work with the Horace Greeley High School Steel Band, its director Jimmy Leyden, and their performance at the Music Educators National Conference provided Mannette with his first major exposure to music educators in the United States.

37 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Ellie Mannette in this chapter stem from interviews by the author on July 14 or 16, 2008.
States. This eventually led to Mannette began working with collegiate programs including Howard University in Washington, D.C., Queens College in New York City, and later Baylor, Texas.

Technological and economic aspects of the United States also had important impacts on Mannette and his work. When he first arrived in the U.S., he tuned all of his pans by ear and “didn’t want to hear about a strobe.” As mentioned in chapter two, Leyden told Mannette about strobe tuners, and that tuning by ear was not effective, and put Mannette to the test. Leyden asked him to tune by ear. When finished, Leyden would first play the marimba or piano as a point of reference, and then used the strobe to show Mannette his notes were wrong. “I shut right up,” notes Mannette, “I could tune the drums well, but proper harmonic relationship of notes, none of us knew.” Leyden could not quite explain it in words to Mannette, but through his skill as a tuner he was able to work anew and make new discoveries.

People say I achieve a great sound and quality, and that’s because of the help of Jimmy Leyden. If I never came to the U.S., I may not have ever learned this. I may still be in Trinidad banging on a can, making some noise. I’m not saying they don’t know this in Trinidad, but sometimes they don’t look at the scientific theories that they should. They have a big loud sound for carnival, for panorama, but look at the fine details of an instrument and tell me how pure it is. It’s not. They don’t have that, and I’ll tell them that, and prove it to them. This is something I have learned in the United States, and I have to give them full compliment for what they have done for me and the art form – not [just] for Ellie Mannette.

The strong U.S. economy also allowed Mannette to make a living as a pan craftsman, which was much more difficult in Trinidad. Mannette noted:

In Trinidad I worked for peanuts. There was no financial backing. In the U.S. I had more money, so I could put more money into the development of the pan. Invest in better materials. In Trinidad, you had to pick up any kind of crap. Barrels had rotten tops and other holes in them. The materials here cost more, but they are higher quality and we can afford it. The financial aspect has helped considerably.
His success in the United States has come at the intersection of persistence, talent, skill, and coincidence.

As noted in Chapter Two, Mannette had to adapt his initial tuning techniques to fit the hegemonic mold of the western tuning system in the United States. However, he refused to accommodate the tropicalism pressures of exoticism and essentialism when insisting that pan be associated with education. The “rough time” he endured in New York City for 15 years demonstrates that he was determined to keep pan on a path that he considered valid and legitimate. In this sphere, Mannette refused to be complicit in the perpetual retelling of the story of pan and calypso as told, and sold, by the American music industry—a story of an overly simplistic island music—and instead remained true to his vision that steel drums should reside, progress, along with other “legitimate” musical instruments within the hallowed halls of universities and other educational institutions. Ironically, the other side of this postcolonial coin is that Mannette was simultaneously taking part in tropicalism by asserting that Western instruments were the legitimate instruments with which he intended to align steelpan.

**Fostering Education – University**

Trinidadian steelpannist and pan tuner Leroy Ali Williams commented upon Mannette’s desire to teach others, “Ellie is the greatest teacher and inspirer of all time where [p]an is concerned and also a very giving person. You know, you walked into a lot of pan-tuners’ workplace and they stopped working. But Ellie didn’t stop working. He began telling you what he was doing. That’s just what he’s been doing from the beginning and still is.”  

While Mannette began with community and high school groups, a major part of his influence in the

---

United States has been within the university system. Some of the early university bands with which he worked, not previously mentioned, include Georgia State University, Wichita State University, Indiana State University, University of North Texas, Brigham Young University, Southwest Texas State, Pennsylvania State University, Michigan State University, East Carolina University, and Portland State University.

Since 1991, Mannette has been in residence at West Virginia University. He feels the pan program there has given wide notoriety to the university, and believes it is important to have a dynamic steel band on a college campus, and a faculty member who knows about arranging, building, tuning, teaching steel band, and facts about the history. People from as far away as London, Sweden and Denmark have contacted WVU about participation in Mannette’s annual summer steel band festival. Currently in his career, Mannette’s focus is to get steel drums into colleges and universities, because college students are going to teach pan to the next generation. As he explained to me, “People like Tim Peterman, Mike Honey, John Wooten, Matt Ford, Gigi Gonzales, who are professors today were in school when Ellie Mannette started working at some of these colleges. Like you! Then they graduated and grew to be men with professional ways of thinking, getting a job, and starting a steel band.” Moreover, he believes that when the university community supports an endeavor, that endeavor is considered more legitimate. “High schools do their own things, but when a university does something, it’s viewed differently, [and] looked at [as] OK.”

Not only are the university and its students good for the progress of the pan art form, but the pan art form increases the marketability of the university student. “It happens all the time.

39 Mannette had an impact on U.S. pannists Darren Dyke, Gary Gibson, Joe Peck, and Phil Hawkins through his work at Wichita State University.

40 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.
People call me and say, ‘Ellie this knowledge about the pan has helped me so much.’ And I say, ‘Yes, it’s an art form that is growing and is here to stay.’” In a personal conversation, he noted that with a background in pan you can be a musician, professor, give lectures, and be a clinician. “It is good that you have the knowledge about pan, Janine, because at some point a position will open at a college and you [will] apply…As you are fully informed, [and] none of the others will have that qualification, [you will] clip the competition…Few people really know about the damn thing. So the more you know…I’m very proud of what you’re doing.” He is skilled at even connecting the interviewer with himself and the greater pan movement in the United States.

As pan begins to be adopted by more and more U.S. universities, we find negotiations between tropicalism and legitimacy being undertaken on multiple levels and in various ways. On one hand, bringing pan into university settings is a means of controlling the Other. Rather than Americans purchasing albums from Trinidad, or attending a concert given by a touring group from the Caribbean, they can capitalize on their tropical desires by producing the music themselves, and educating their students to follow suit. In other words, as Foucault and Said have claimed, academic disciplines do not simply produce knowledge but also generate power. On the other hand, Mannette’s goals, personal agenda, and legacy are being promoted and carried forward thanks to his entrepreneurial spirit, prodigious skills, and charismatic personality. Across the United States, Mannette enamors numerous music educators on a personal level, as well as with his unique story and accomplished work.

**Workshops**

Ellie Mannette has traveled to multiple college campuses to conduct workshops. Workshops at universities such as Georgia State University, Michigan State University, Brigham
Young University, North Carolina State University, University of Texas – El Paso, and Indiana University last for approximately a week, and cover topics such as instrument construction, tuning, and performance. His more regular, annual workshops have been hosted by Portland State University, for seven years, and West Virginia University for 16 years. WVU experienced a temporary hiatus in hosting pan workshops between 2009 and 2012, which inspired then-workshop coordinator and American pannist Tom Miller to establish his own workshops at the University of Denver in 2010. In 2012, the Mannette workshop restarted, and another, brand-new pan workshop was initiated at the University of Delaware. At its peak in the mid to late 2000s, the Mannette workshop had close to 100 participants divided into bands of three skills levels who were taught by six or seven clinicians, and serviced by another dozen tuners and other staff members. Since that time, however, none of these workshops achieved that high number of participants, clinicians, and staff.

Pan workshops in the United States have been fostering personal and professional relationships between novices, students, and professionals. Gary Gibson met American pannist Tom Miller in 1985 at the Haystack Summer Workshop taught by Mannette. Even earlier than this, Gibson had cultivated relationships with Cliff Alexis, Al O’Connor, and Shannon Dudley at a pan building and tuning workshop at the University of Akron around 1981 or 1982. Tom Miller and Shannon Dudley have played in a professional steel band together called Pan Ramajay. These early workshops also helped bolster relationships between new pan players

---

41 The workshop hosted by the University of Portland was also known as the Haystack Summer Workshop. The workshop hosted by West Virginia University has at times been called the Mannette Festival of Steel and Meet Me in Morgantown. Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

42 At the time, Miller was a student at the University of Akron.

43 Gary Gibson, email message to author, September 26, 2002.
coming out of universities, who desired to make a career with their new skills, knowledge, and instrument.

**Master Craftsman**

Ellie Mannette is often called The Father of the Modern Steel Drum. This designation stems from his numerous, aforementioned contributions to the development of the pan, particularly building pans’ playing surfaces in a concave fashion, and building pans from a 55-gallon oil barrel. Since these innovations in the 1940s, Mannette has continued to work to craft a “perfect” instrument, and refers to himself as a perfectionist. Notably, most of his work toward this end has occurred at or in connection with universities—WVU most especially—and it is even to the scientific values of academic culture that he aspires in his pan-making art. He states that, “according to all the professors, Ellie Mannette is the standard.” This statement is indeed hyperbolic, but competing pan U.S. company Panyard, Inc. has evidently professed, “Our entire goal is to build a better drum than Ellie Mannette.” Mannette also has a lighthearted competitive nature with his own apprentices. “I tell them, ‘I’ll bust you up anytime; I’ll show you [how to build a great pan].’” One time Mannette-apprentice Alan Coyle evidently corroborated this sentiment by saying, “Ellie, you set a standard and we’ve got to try to get there.”

An equally important contribution made by Mannette to pan craftsmanship has been his willingness to share his knowledge, experience, and expertise. According to U.S. steelpan pedagogue, Chris Tanner, “Ellie Mannette will be remembered as a pioneer, but he also should be remembered for having enough foresight, and humility, to recognize that pan is bigger than any one person, even himself. He has made a concerted effort to pass on his knowledge to
others.” Likewise, Jeff Narell has stated, “…I see Ellie as an ambassador who did not share with the idea, ‘Let’s hold on tightly to what we have, ‘cause this is ours, and let’s not share it.’ His dream now is to leave the art form in the capable hands of those who will advance it even beyond his own dreams and capabilities.” Indeed, Mannette has trained a set of builders to carry on this legacy, some of whom still work with him, and others who have their own pan building and tuning businesses.

Prior to making his permanent residence in Morgantown, West Virginia, Mannette trained a handful of people to build and tune pans including Chris Wabich and Dave Berry who are still active as instrument craftsmen, and Wheeler Matthews. Matthews, an engineer with Duke Energy, allowed Mannette to craft and tune in his shop in Seneca, South Carolina, in exchange for learning the basics of steelpan craftsmanship. Ultimately, Matthews became the Carolina extension of Tom Reynolds’ pan building company, Tropical Hammer, based in Sanford, Florida. “Ellie gave tuning instruction to hundreds of people - literally - over the years but very few are actually tuning.” Once in Morgantown, Mannette trained several tuners including Alan Coyle, Glenn Rowsey, Billy Sheeder, Chanler Bailey, Emily Lemmerman, Rob Davis, Eric Fountain, Keith Moone and Darren Dyke who are active today, crafting new

44 Chris Tanner, email message to author, February 24, 2007.
46 Darren Dyke, email message to author, June 29, 2014.
47 Bobby Crosby, email message to author, September 19, 2011.
48 Reynolds took over tuning the school bands in Panama City when Mannette’s tenure with Charlie Rogers ended. This tenure will be further explained in a later section of this chapter.
49 Bobby Crosby, email message to author, September 20, 2011.
50 Darren Dyke, email message to author, June 29, 2014.
instruments, and providing maintenance for pans in need of repair. They have the skills required
to make any voice in the steel orchestra, and ability to work within any stage of the building
process.

Keith Moone, an alumnus of West Virginia University, began working with Mannette in
2005 and currently works in Mannette’s shop. Moone notes, “Ellie is constantly influencing me
in my craft. As a matter of fact, everyday he is on me about what I’m doing right and what I can
improve on.” Mannette employee Eric Fountain, who began working for the company in 2004,
shares this sentiment, “I feel like my training is everyday.” Glenn Rowsey starting working
with Mannette for the University Tuning Project in 1994 while a student at West Virginia
University. He would make $25 for sinking a pan to seven inches deep. He left the company in
2007 to begin working for himself as a pan builder and tuner, remaining in Morgantown, West
Virginia. Rowsey completed much of his building and tuning tutelage under Alan Coyle and
Darren Dyke, who were earlier apprentices of Mannette, but found Mannette to be an important
source of inspiration regarding his work ethic.

Ellie taught me to never be satisfied with my work, and I think about it everyday. He always said as soon as you’re happy with your work someone behind you is going to pass you up. I took it to heart, but with less on the competition. For me it’s the personal growth thing. I’ve had pans that I thought were awesome, and then I would literally destroy the tuning with a bunch more hammering and burning. A month or so later, I would have a better pan.

---

51 Darren Dyke, email message to author, March 13, 2014.
52 Keith Moone, email message to author, July 5, 2014.
53 Eric Fountain, email message to author, August 4, 2014.
54 Sinking a pan seven inches deep refers to pounding the top of a 55-gallon oil barrel from a flat surface to a concave surface that is seven inches below the top of the barrel, at its deepest point.
55 Glenn Rowsey, email message to author, July 1, 2014.
Rowsey used to spend half his year on the road, tuning pans, but plans to focus his attention on training fledgling tuners. According to him, it is “Time to focus on training. The supply of [pre-existing] pans and [the lack of] tuners is the biggest threat to pan as a tool for music education.” As most steel band activities across the United States exist in conjunction with an educational institution, many pan educators and their students acknowledge a link between pan and some aspect of music education, such as improving upon the ability to read and perform complex rhythms, as well as providing a musicultural education.

Darren Dyke met Mannette while a student at Wichita State University in the late 1980s. In 1995, Dyke moved to Morgantown to learn from Mannette. In 2001 Dyke moved to Austin, Texas to begin a southern branch of Mannette Steel Drums, which was discontinued a year later. Dyke then established his own instrument crafting business in Austin, where he remained until relocating overseas in early 2014. When asked how Mannette has influenced him, Dyke states, “He inspired the whole thing. I wouldn’t be a tuner, at all, if it weren’t for him. I didn’t want to tune steel drums, I wanted to learn what he knew. It wasn’t about tuning pan. It was about learning what Ellie was doing, because I valued it. I would have never studied with anyone else. That was never a question.” Two important concepts that Dyke recalled learning from Mannette were challenging oneself and experimentation. According to Dyke, there are a lot of tuners who will not work on drums made by others, because they think others’ instruments are too poor in quality. “Ellie never does that. It was this approach: if it’s a steel drum, you can tune it. It doesn’t matter who made it, what condition it’s in, you can make it better. There are no cop-outs. If somebody brings you a pan, you can fix it.” In terms of experimentation, Dyke notes he is still

56 Ibid.

57 All quotes from Darren Dyke in this paragraph stem from my interview with him on July 16, 2014.
learning the craft, and recently had a breakthrough that has significantly changed how he tunes. He credits Mannette with this “sense of being open to changing how you work. That’s how he works. He’s always doing different stuff.”

Dyke continues to build and tune pans, both in the U.S. and Europe. He is also learning to make and tune handpans now because, “it’s vastly more popular than steel drums and there are going to be more people playing these things on the face of the earth, than pan, very soon.” In fact, just before our interview, Dyke was waiting for the arrival of a handpan to tune. The ‘owner’ showed up stating he had just sold the instrument to a buyer, and that buyer decided against having it tuned by Dyke because in his personal assessment that, “it didn’t need to be tuned.” This is a reminder that whether steelpans or handpans, many novice musicians and listeners do not know what a ‘good’ sound is. It may be even more subjective in the case of handpans because the focus of handpan music is soloistic, not requiring the musician to interact with other tuned instruments. On the other hand, because the current mainstream view of handpan players tends to evoke hippies in a drum circle, perhaps this association will promote the steelpans to be viewed as more legitimate, by comparison.

The educational and apprenticeship line from Mannette to Coyle to Dyke to Rowsey to Rowsey’s desire to train new tuners illustrates a lineage of tuning that is easily traced to

58 Originally called hang drums, these instrument types are generically known as handpans at present. Handpans are approximately two feet in diameter and consist of two convex domes that are sealed together at their widest point. They are held in the lap when played, most often with the bare hands. While they sound quite similar to a steelpans, they are slightly muffled in resonance and have far fewer notes than a steelpans, which restricts the number of harmonic keys they can utilize.


60 Darren Dyke, interview by author, July 16, 2014.
Mannette, and implies that his skills and influence will not fade away with him, but will continue in the United States and Trinidad.  

Even in his late 80s, Mannette wants to improve pan. He wants scientific ways to determine what makes a good note. “We have to have some way of determining what is of high value. If we have three pans, all playing an A, and each sounds different – one is bright, one is dark, one in the middle – how do we know which really has the value of an A? We need a way of evaluating which is the best, and a level of consistency of that for the instrument of the future.” Mannette acknowledges that metallurgy plays an important role in the consistency an instrument’s quality and sound. “So you should have consistent metal, which is obtained from the scientist, the metallurgist, the chemist, the physicist…We need metal designed specifically for the steel drum, and I cannot tell you how we are going to accomplish that. Even in the future when I am not around, that should be accomplished.” Simultaneously, Mannette recognizes that if science were to be regarded too highly in the development of pan, the tone of the instrument would sound too pure, and cease to sound like a pan. “If you take out all the imperfections, then it won’t sound like a steel drum any more. If you take out the octaves and harmonics, imperfections of the metal, [and] impure overtones that clash with each other [it will not sound like a steel drum, because] when you strike one note, the entire instrument and all its notes, and skirt, vibrate.”

---

61 Around 2007, Billy Sheeder, Mannette’s previous apprentice, met Trinidadian pan tuner, Mazzini Gill in Trinidad. Sheeder was asked by Trinidadian pan tuners Mappo, Doyle, and Junior to tune a few notes on a new drum to be “put to The Test,” (their words). In January 2010, Sheeder first took his hammers down for the panorama season, getting work with bands and working on new drums at Gill’s Pan Shop. Since then, he has traveled to Trinidad annually, meeting and teaching some of Mannette’s techniques to the younger tuners at Gill’s when possible. July 16, 2014.

62 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes in this paragraph and the subsequent two come from Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 16, 2008.
Mannette also considers standardization to be of importance for the future of the art form. “I’m not saying my drum has to be the standard, but we have to have a consensus about what is the best. We need to have all these tuners sit down and see who has the best drum. Let’s see which pattern comes out better, consistently. We have to have science.” He notes that the current state of pan has been accomplished in a relatively short period of time compared to other instruments, which have taken hundreds of years to reach their current standard, and that pan is only 55-60 years old. And while, “We have formed an entire orchestra in that period of time and a relatively pretty damn good sound,” Mannette admits, “I would not say it’s perfect, but pretty good.”

Both Mannette’s aptitude for convincing academic institutions to incorporate pans into their programs and his capacity for leveraging such institutional inclusion toward an anti-tropicalism agenda have previously been noted. Indeed, his dedication to the advancement of pan through the crafting of excellent instruments that benefit from advanced scientific methods and technologies may be viewed through this same lens. That is, pan should not be seen as an simple novelty, but rather as a legitimate and complex instrument to be taken seriously for its musical, cultural, and educational values. As a culture bearer, Mannette himself symbolizes legitimacy, and those who have studied craftsmanship with him can lay claim to that lineage. Just as Garrett discusses how the “inclusion of native Hawaiian musicians proved equally critical to the show’s success, and their music became a key selling point,” likewise Mannette has equal appeal as a Trinidadian.63 And yet, by teaching his craft to Americans, Mannette has played a part in tropicalism by teaching numerous Americans to succeed him in making steel drums. In fact, he has been accused of “selling his birthright” by Trinidadians who condemn him for sharing his

knowledge about how to make their national instrument with non-Trinidadians that they regarded as having no right to do so.

**Associated Programs**

**Oberlin Steel**

Ellie Mannette has directly and indirectly influenced numerous pan programs housed by educational institutions, across the United States. I have included discussions of various pan programs and individual pannists here to paint a picture of pan as it exists in different educational environs within the United States and to highlight Mannette’s influence, discussing similarities and differences between groups and individuals along the way.

As previously mentioned, Mannette and Jimmy Leyden worked together because of the Calliope’s Children Steel Orchestra at Horace Greeley High School, in Chappaqua, New York. In the spring of 1980, students Peter Mayer, Mike Geller, and Toby Gordon graduated from Horace Greeley and matriculated to Oberlin College in the fall, bringing with them steelpans from the high school to establish their own collegiate steel band. Initially called the Can Consortium at Oberlin, and now known as Oberlin Steel, the students continue to run the band fairly independently as part of the Experimental College (ExCo). ExCo is a university program that allows students to teach other students in credited courses. Most of the financial support for Oberlin Steel is obtained through income earned playing gigs, which supports necessary instrument upkeep, the purchase of new instruments, music, sticks, stick tips, and engine room items, hiring clinicians, and the transportation required for performances. Minor financial

---

64 The steel band at Oberlin College changed its name from the Can Consortium to Oberlin Steel in 2001, considering the ‘can’ reference disrespectful to the instrument and its history.

65 No grades are given, but rather the courses are pass/fail.
backing has come from the Student Finance Committee and the Experimental College Committee. Although the band has a faculty advisor, he or she is not involved with the instruction or day-to-day decision making of the band. Instead, students take on roles such as musical director, performance coordinator, and packing coordinator. Rehearsals occur three times a week: twice a week for the band populated of experienced players, and once a week for the ExCo, which is the credited course band. The ExCo ensemble serves as a training and audition group for the primary performance group, Oberlin Steel. Students can only enroll in the ExCo band once.

Most Oberlin Steel musicians first encountered steel drums at Oberlin, although a few had seen them on television (Reading Rainbow, Police Academy Five: Assignment: Miami Beach, Sesame Street). Musicians joined the group because it looked like fun, they enjoyed the music, and for social reasons. Playing pan had two salient affects on students: new musical (often rhythmic) experiences and new/greater cultural experiences/appreciation. Others reported improved planning, time management, and theory skills, professional and personal connections, happiness, and performance confidence. Students recounted that the band affected the school and local communities primarily through entertainment and educational exposure, increased social and community relations, and a diversified campus experience.

Personal interviews with Oberlin Steel members Noah Smit, Patia Maule, Oliver Mains, and Lily Rosenman lend further insights into the specifics of how Oberlin Steel works, and how members relate to the larger pan and music scenes. In terms of pedagogy, many members learn

66 In a scene at the Miami airport, there is a steel band playing. This supports the mainstream American association of pan with any “tropical,” in this case sub-tropical, environment, leading to tropicalism.

67 Generalized group information obtained via written surveys of Oberlin Steel members.
from sheet music, but music literacy is not a requirement of the band. Rosenman learned by rote, which is the primary mode of learning pan in Trinidad. In her experience, learning by rote was more difficult at first, but the lack of expectation of music literacy removed the stress from her overall experience. Instead of using sheet music, she observed other band members, and made audio recordings during rehearsals. Whether learning by rote or with sheet music, all music is eventually memorized for the pragmatic and aesthetic purposes of not having pannists stare intently at sheet music, or music stands blocking the audience’s view of the musicians.

Each of the four interviewed members mentioned ways in which playing in Oberlin Steel has benefitted them in their professional, musical, and personal development. Smit cites learning new music styles and receiving a formalized music education, including music theory. Maule notes both academic and performance based influences. Her pan experiences have had such an impact on her life that she focused her individually designed major on Caribbean Studies and ethnomusicology, with her senior thesis exploring carnival music of Trinidad, Cuba, and Martinique. As the musical director of the ensemble, she became skilled at dealing with people, presenting information tactfully, leading a group, and teaching music. Like Oberlin’s band, some members of her high school steel band did not read music, so she was already versed in an important pedagogical technique for rote learners: intense repetitive drilling. She noted one of the difficult aspects of maintaining Oberlin Steel through constant personnel turnover and rote learning was a large loss of information when members graduated, causing a loss of history of the band itself, playing technique, and knowledge of how a piece should sound. Therefore, the

---


69 Ibid.

band also relied on information through students attending pan workshops such as the Mannette Steel Drum Workshop, or from pan clinicians, such as Tom Miller and Gary Gibson, visiting Oberlin. Although the information turnover was high, Oberlin Steel has existed for nearly thirty-five years.

Mains, one of the few conservatory members in Oberlin Steel, claims that playing pan improved his sense of rhythm and ability to sight-read difficult rhythms. He found their annual educational outreach tour beneficial as he anticipated the logistics to be similar to his future life as a professional musician. Rosenman purportedly learned about Trinidad, different rhythms, and rhythmic concepts.

A portion of Smit and Maule’s identity was determined by their pan activities. For Smit this was because he belonged to a small group of people who played in a steel band. He claimed his sense of community strengthened with his experiences in educating children. With her extensive pan knowledge and experience, Maule felt capable of educating others, and regularly enjoyed being a source of knowledge for individuals seeking pan information.

Oberlin Steel considered themselves a dance band, and performed around ten times a semester both on and off campus. Events and venues included the eve of commencement (Illumination), student organization functions, the campus coffeehouse, dinner banquets, Friday gatherings, Halloween, the annual community grassroots parade, the Fireman’s Ball in the neighboring town of Elyria, and their annual spring break tour which incorporated roughly ten performances from New England to Georgia. As the drum set player, Smit believed his rock influences have affected the sound of Oberlin Steel. Before he joined, the repertoire consisted of more easy listening due to jazz drummers in the group. Now they play louder and faster with more danceable styles such as panoramas, calypsos, and socas in their repertoire. As an ensemble

---

71 Lily Rosenman, interview by author, April 30, 2003.
primarily focused on entertainment, the band tried to make performances as festive as possible by flashing big smiles, visibly enjoying themselves, and encouraging listeners to dance.

By promoting the dance/entertainment band classification through these ‘festive’ behaviors, some audience members may view Oberlin Steel, and steel band in general, as stereotyped. To combat this perception and misconception, Maule notes they, “never ever wear Hawaiian shirts, ever, ever, never, ever.” Instead, they wear red and black attire for formal performances; for less formal gigs musicians sometimes wear a different color from head to toe emulating a rainbow, or themed clothing, such as 1980s attire, depending on the nature of the performance. The Oberlin Steel band repertoire mainly consisted of calypso and soca ‘standards’ including “Bee’s Melody,” “Fire Down Below,” “Pan in A Minor,” and “The Hammer,” but also included original compositions by band members.

Oberlin College is noteworthy for having been the first U.S. institution of higher learning to regularly admit black and female students, in addition to the predominantly white, male student body. However, in the late 1990s, there was an incident whereby an African-American female was not admitted into Oberlin Steel and she cited race as the reason for her refusal into the band. Band members denied these accusations. As time passed, and once the student in question graduated, the issue subsided. Still, some residual concerns over cultural appropriation cropped up among band members and the greater student body. Rosenman stated she disliked

---

72 Oliver Mains, interview by author, April 30, 2003.
73 Lily Rosenman, interview by author, April 30, 2003.
75 Red, black, and white are the colors of the Trinidadian national flag.
76 The notion of “standard” repertoire will be addressed in a later chapter.
77 The band chose not to purchase more sheet music from Panyard, Inc. at this time.
these cultural appropriation issues that made her question whether or not she should play pan as a white, American woman. Simultaneously, she also felt it important to consider and address such cultural issues.

Interviewed members of Oberlin Steel expressed differing views regarding how non-band members interpreted the legitimacy of the band. Smit felt certain people in the conservatory did not consider the band a real musical group. According to Maule, there was a perception held by some band members that the percussion department head thought Oberlin Steel would hinder the development of desired percussion techniques. However, Mains, a conservatory student noted most of his conservatory friends paid little attention to nearly all non-conservatory groups as they were already surrounded by music. “There certainly was not disdain.” Smit also noted he was discouraged by his “rock and roll friends” for joining Oberlin Steel who did not realize, “we are pretty hard, we’re not jazzy.” While Mains felt the steel band was successful as they had a good reputation around campus and were hired for parties, other band members felt their fan base decreased in the early 2000s. Mains noted another band member hypothesized that their lack of "wackiness" factored in the poor fan response. In fact, when selecting new members for the group, current members considered both musicianship and stage presence. Audience members can experience a higher level of fun when watching musicians enjoy themselves by dancing or jumping around while performing; colorful or costume-like outfits add to this festive performance practice. In terms of legitimacy, “wackiness” connotes “silliness” and may suggest novelty rather than validity.

78 Oliver Mains, interview by author, April 30, 2003.
80 Oliver Mains, interview by author, April 30, 2003.
Maule and Mains mentioned the significance and contributions of Ellie Mannette and his steel band workshop in Morgantown. Maule appreciated the small community of pannists who knew each other. “I went to the workshop in Morgantown this summer and it is such a small community, they can bring in the best clinicians to work with 100 people or 60 [and] Robbie Greenidge knew my name. You don’t get there anywhere else.” Maule and Mains both noted Mannette as an important figure for providing resources for Midwestern pannists, and Maule extended his influence to the dissemination pan across the United States as a whole.

Oberlin Steel has a notable narrative of contributing to pan progress in the United States. According to Maule, previous members of Oberlin Steel have moved on to play with other bands, start their own bands, and teach pan lessons, and their unused pans have been donated to other programs just being established. For example, original member Shannon Dudley is a highly regarded pan scholar and ethnomusicologist. Rosenman claimed a number of people from the Oberlin group had moved to the Bay Area in California where they continue to play pan, and that people from the Bay Area attend school in Oberlin. Indeed, Mains’s first exposure to pans

---

81 Robbie Greenidge is a famous Trinidadian steel pan performer, composer, and arranger, and pannist for Jimmy Buffett and his Coral Reefer band.


83 Some of Oberlin Steel’s pans were purchased from Ellie Mannette. Maule also cited Cliff Alexis and Panyard, Inc. as important to the Midwest pan network.

85 Maule also cites Cliff Alexis and the West Indian community in New York City as contributing to the dissemination of pan throughout the United States.


87 Member Jackie Davis, who went to Alaska to teach, took some of the old pans. She brought up a lead and seconds that the band no longer used.
occurred at a summer camp in Berkeley, California, and Rosenman’s was playing with the Chabot College Panhandlers during her senior year of high school.\textsuperscript{88}

Mannette’s work with Calliope’s Children, the genesis ensemble for Oberlin Steel, seems tangential, but without him it is possible Calliope’s Children would never have been so successful. The original use of pan in this group hinged upon the ability to integrate pan within a high school band that used standardized tuning. Without Mannette’s skilled craftsmanship, the endeavor may have been abandoned. In more recent times and in more direct ways, Mannette is an important resource again as a craftsman for maintaining the group’s instrumentation and inspiring musicians through the interpersonal connections between student musicians and preeminent, world renown pannists.

**Texas-Based Collegiate Steel Bands**

Notable U.S. pannist Gary Gibson was the first director of the North Texas State University (now called University of North Texas) steel band, founded in 1982. The instruments arrived during the first week of Gibson’s master’s coursework. He reminisces, “…we hurriedly built stands for them (I distinctly remember going over to Ron Brough's house on Saturday to build bass stands out of 2X4s)…Our main performance was backing up Andy Narell at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) that November – that particular PASIC was in Dallas.”\textsuperscript{89} According to Gibson, Cliff Alexis probably built UNT’s first pans, but,

\textsuperscript{88} Lily Rosenmen’s brother attended a middle school geared toward the arts that had a steel band. He was a friend of the director’s, who also directed the Chabot Panhandlers. Her brother brought a lead pan home over the weekend and the director invited Lily to play with the Panhandlers on Tuesday nights.

\textsuperscript{89} Brough is the founder and director of the Brigham Young University steel band, Panoramic Steel. Gary Gibson, email message to author, September 22, 2011.
“As the band grew and got more in the loop, they probably ordered more Mannette pans.”\(^{90}\)

Gibson clearly preferred Mannette’s craftsmanship.

Gibson presumes then-percussion professor, Bob Schietroma, “…simply wanted the department to "keep up" with the national trends, and saw the need to have a steel band as a part of that effort.”\(^{91}\) Schietroma did not personally participate much with the steel band, or the eventual UNT gamelan, but rather supported the ensembles as a means of keeping UNT at the forefront of university-supported, world percussion programs. During their first year, the UNT steel band played, “the usual stuff you'd expect a beginning band of that time period to do,”\(^{92}\) but remarkably, he mentioned “Mas in South,” and Andy Narell’s arrangement of “Oyelo que te Conviene,” both of which remain favorites in today’s pan repertoire.\(^{93}\)

The UNT steel band, especially their performance at PASIC with Andy Narell, as well as Ellie Mannette, had great influences on percussion professors Tony McCutchen and Allen Teel. Primarily self-taught, McCutchen attended many workshops and clinics to learn about pan. However, he cites Andy Narell, Ellie Mannette, and the University of North Texas steel band as being significant inspirations in his early days. “After hearing Andy Narell play a clinic/concert and the UNT Steel Band at PASIC in Dallas around 1984, I bought a pan from Ellie Mannette, who was living in Perry, Georgia at the time, where he had his workshop.” McCutchen eventually started bands at the University of Georgia and Jacksonville State University.\(^{94}\)

\(^{90}\) Gary Gibson, email message to author, September 22, 2011.

\(^{91}\) Ibid.

\(^{92}\) Ibid.

\(^{93}\) The significance of this repertoire will be discussed further in chapter seven.

\(^{94}\) Thomas McCutchen, interview by author, November 11, 2011.
After his second year of teaching at Abilene Christian University (ACU), Allen Teel attended a pan workshop at UNT in the summer of 1987. That fall, he began investigating doctoral programs, focusing on those with a steelband program. With a leave of absence from ACU, Teel began attending the University of Georgia in the fall of 1988. UGA had recently started its own pan program. Besides playing and gigging as a student, UGA professor Tony McCutchen allowed Teel to start and lead a ‘second band’ at the university during his second year. “I should add that another factor drawing me to Georgia was that Ellie was living in Perry, GA (not too far from Athens) back then. …[H]e was on campus a couple of times, and I purchased a lead pan from him in early 1990.” Upon returning to ACU, Teel founded a steel band. Kenyon Williams had just matriculated at Abilene Christian University when the pan program had started in the fall of 1992. Williams went on to participate in pan programs at the Hartt School and the University of Kentucky, eventually forming his own band at Minnesota State University – Moorhead in 2003.

Ellie Mannette and the Narell family are inextricably linked in the history of pan in the United States; without the Narells, Mannette perhaps would have never come to the United States, and without Mannette the Narells likely would not have achieved the same level of success. Andy Narell’s performance at PASIC may have given UNT the catalytic boost to institute pan as a part of their progressive world percussion program. It may not be a coincidence that Gary Gibson, who was brought to UNT as a master’s student to be the first director of the university’s new steel band after learning pan as an undergraduate at Wichita State University, first saw a steel band – the highly visible Navy Steel Band – thanks to the relationship between

95 Allen Teel, email message to author, February 10, 2014.

96 Kenyon Williams, email message to author, October 5, 2011.
Mannette and the Navy’s band. Ultimately, Mannette is cited as an important resource of instrument craftsmanship, for the UNT steel band, Tony McCutchen, and Allen Teel, who in turn have influenced dozens of other students.

**Georgia and Florida**

Ellie Mannette’s influence while residing in Perry, Georgia, was felt throughout the southern and southeastern portions of the United States. Bobby Crosby first met Mannette in 1984, as a middle school student in Panama City, Florida. Mannette and his assistant Kaethe George would travel from Perry to Panama City to tune pans until 1991. Charlie Rogers, who taught Crosby at Mowat Middle School and Mosley High School, owned the pans.97 Rogers’ professional group was named Steel Breeze, and consisted of four separate bands comprised of his upper level students. Rogers met Mannette at a music convention, “…in Jacksonville, I believe. It may have been FMEA,”98 where he initially purchased a tenor, double second, and triple guitar pans from Mannette. Rogers died in a car accident returning home from a pan gig,99 but his student Crosby carries on his work as a high school steel band instructor in Trion, Georgia. Rogers’ mother sold all of his pans at an estate sale where former students of his purchased them, “which is a good thing because the majority of them were Ellie pans.”100

97 Bobby Crosby, email message to author, September 20, 2011.

98 This group started around 1982 under the name Charlie Rogers and the Trinidadios. The official spelling of Trinidadios is unknown. The first band was a professional group before incorporating students. Bobby Crosby, email message to author, September 19, 2011.

99 Ibid.

100 Bobby Crosby, email message to author, September 20, 2011.
Bill King, Director Emeritus of the Unity Christian School (UCS) steel band in Rome, Georgia, is considered by some to be “…the Father of Steel Drums in Georgia. He brought Ellie Mannette to Rome, in 1980” from New York City. According to their website, “UCS steel drum ensembles are comprised of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voiced instruments,” which interestingly describes their steel band in terms of a Western harmonic framework rather than using the proper names of the instruments. This may be to better explain the pans to those raised in the Western classical tradition. Arguably, it also connects pan with a more “sophisticated” music tradition to help legitimize the art form.

**West Virginia University (and the Morgantown, Virginia, Region)**

Before Ellie Mannette became established at West Virginia University (WVU) in 1991, he was “very influential on the instructors and students” at universities such as Wichita State University, Brigham Young University, Southwest Texas State, University of North Texas, and Appalachian State University. In the early 1990s, WVU percussion professor Phil Faini was in the beginning stages of developing a collection of world music instruments at the university. Faini met Mannette around this time, and convinced Mannette to set up residence in Morgantown, and to set up his workshop in the Creative Arts Center on WVU’s campus. Mannette feels WVU deserves recognition for bringing him to campus; this move was a leap of faith in that the university effectively knew nothing about steel drums. Trusting Mannette’s

---

101 Gregory B. Smith, email message to author, September 20, 2011.


103 Darren Dyke, text message to author, September 22, 2011.

104 His workshop was originally called the University Tuning Project. Chris Tanner, email message to author, February 24, 2007.
reputation, WVU invested “hundreds of thousands of dollars in the pan…and they have
developed the best steel band program in the country…as a whole.” He clarifies this assessment
by stating, “WVU might not be the best playing band, … but instrumentation, nobody has the
equipment WVU has, because we build it right on campus here. We can build the drums and
tune them free.”

This precedence for the physical instrument over performance suggests that Mannette is an instrument craftsman above all.

Mannette’s involvement in educating and nurturing other craftsmen has been explored. He has also inspired many WVU students to continue as educators and musicians. WVU alumni and Mannette Steel Drums employees Chanler Bailey, Eric Fountain, and Keith Moone have all taught students to play pan in different institutions. Bailey has founded his own business in Morgantown called CB Studios, where he teaches steel band weekly to community members. Fountain has taught at CB Studios and at Waynesburg High School in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania. Moone has taught in conjunction with WVU’s Community Music Program.

WVU alumnus Chip Buck founded the Westwood Middle School Panhandlers in Morgantown in 1994. One of the most active pan students to have participated in Buck’s Panhandlers to date is Dave Longfellow. Longfellow met Mannette as a middle school student when he began playing in the WVU steelband, and has worked closely with Mannette since that time. Matriculating at West Virginia University in 2001 as an undergraduate, Longfellow began serving as co-director of the WVU steel band in 2002; formed his own gigging combo, the Dave Longfellow Ensemble that played hundreds of engagements from 2001 to 2008, and recorded

105 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

106 The Community Music Program is an educational community outreach program that provides musical training for amateur performers, enlightened listeners, and professional musicians of all ages. Eric Fountain, email message to author, March 17, 2014.
two studio albums; arranged Mannette’s first compositional work in roughly thirty years called “My Paradise”; graduated to become the director of the Virginia Beach Rhythm Project, and coordinator of the Virginia Beach PANorama festival in 2008; and is workshop coordinator for the Mannette Festival of Steel as of 2013.\textsuperscript{107}

The Rhythm Project is a world percussion ensemble based in Virginia Beach that includes several community-based steel bands. Since its founding in 1996, three West Virginia University alumni have directed the program: Anthony Hailey, Ben Meyer, and Dave Longfellow. Meyer left the Rhythm Project to teach steelpan to students in the North Charleston district, in Charleston, South Carolina. Meyer and Kurry Seymour, both graduates of Mannette’s WVU pan program, have each taught pan in public schools in Charleston, South Carolina, the latter two in the Dorchester district.\textsuperscript{108}

Anthony Hailey was an upperclassman at Eastern Carolina University (ECU) when percussion instructor Mark Ford introduced him to pan in 1990. “Mark led me to my own personal practice room with a double second pan in it, handed me a huge 3-ring binder with about 50 charts in it and said, ‘Learn these tunes. We have a gig in 3 weeks.’ The way it all went down, it seems like someone may have done the same to him.”\textsuperscript{109} Ford started a band called Panama Steel\textsuperscript{110} in the mid-late 1980s.\textsuperscript{111} It was Ford’s personal project, not a part of the ECU curriculum. The band played extensively in eastern North Carolina’s coastal villages during the

\textsuperscript{107} Dave Longfellow, email message to author, August 4, 2014.

\textsuperscript{108} Kurry Seymour, text message to author, March 11, 2014.

\textsuperscript{109} Anthony Hailey, email message to author, October 27, 2011.

\textsuperscript{110} An interesting choice for a band name, as the location is nowhere near Panama, or Panama City, Florida. I surmise part of the reason for this choice is a generic reference to Panama City, Panama City Beach, or Panama the country, all of which are more tropical locales than North Carolina.

\textsuperscript{111} Anthony Hailey, email message to author, October 4, 2011.
summer, making up to $200-300 a week. Hailey reflects, “Pan made me… think pragmatically about my studies. Can I get paid…playing marimba, timpani, and multi-percussion? No! What are the odds I [will] be able to earn a living…teaching with only traditional [W]estern percussion? Slim! … honestly as a young black male in a white male dominated [W]estern percussion world, pan seemed to be my best option for success.”

Hailey founded the PANorama Caribbean Music Fest in 2002 in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in conjunction with the Rhythm Project and the Virginia Arts Festival.

He currently directs the Mosaic Steel Orchestra in Norfolk, Virginia, which he founded in 2007. Mosaic teaches cultural studies and performance practice to area youth through steelpan experiences.

During Hailey’s time at ECU, Ford brought Ellie Mannette and the Navy Steel Band to ECU for a workshop. This was the first large steel band Hailey had seen. Mannette captivated Hailey with his personal stories and how he made instruments; Hailey followed Mannette to West Virginia University in 1992 for his Masters degree.

Hailey studied instrument construction, composition, and arranging with Mannette at WVU, and stayed on to complete his DMA, focusing on world percussion.


113 Dave Longfellow, email message to author, October 3, 2011.

114 Anthony Hailey, email message to author, October 4, 2011.

115 Anthony Hailey, email message to author, October 27, 2011.
Mannette has connected with hundreds of students and community members since moving to Morgantown, West Virginia. He has sustained the role of instrument craftsman, pedagogue, historian, mentor, composer, inspiration, paternal figure, and friend.

**Miami University**

The Miami University Steel Band, located in Oxford, Ohio, was established in 1994 by WVU alumnus Chris Tanner. As Tanner remembers it, the WVU percussion ensemble borrowed pans from another school the semester before Mannette’s arrival, and incorporated them into the percussion ensemble concert. Once Mannette arrived, he immediately built a set of pans for WVU.

Having Ellie Mannette working in a room in the basement of the CAC was nothing short of amazing. Here was a genius, a living legend, a major innovator in pan, right in our midst! It was nothing to go down to his workroom during your lunchtime, for example, and sit and watch him work. While there, invariably Ellie would chat with you, or show/explain what he was doing in tuning a pitch, or in shaping a pan. It was incredible. Not many people (at least, not many in the US) have had the luxury of sitting next to a master tuner like Ellie and just observing him, soaking it in...just being in his company.

As a student at WVU, Tanner learned to play double seconds, lead, guitars, and bass in the WVU Steel Band. “I played seconds primarily, but also learned to play lead, guitars, bass. I immediately fell in love with this instrument!”

Mannette did not direct the band, but according to Tanner he would attend rehearsals every once in a while to see what was going on. Doctoral student Jamie Eckert led the band. Eckert had played pan prior to coming to WVU, and at the beginning was the only student who

---

116 The Creative Arts Center is the name of the building where university music courses and activities are held.

117 Chris Tanner, email message to author, February 24, 2007.

118 Ibid.
knew about pan. Tanner believes percussion professor Faini probably had a small hand in helping Eckert select repertoire, but that was the extent of Faini’s involvement; Eckert was in charge of the band.

Aside from Mannette being at WVU, two other events really influenced Tanner. One was a kind of ‘summit’ that Mannette and his personal assistant, Kaethe George, hosted at WVU, where Andy Narell, Tom Miller, Mat Britain, and Ken "Professor" Philmore performed. Tanner found this experience quite inspiring. The following year, Andy Narell returned to WVU and participated in a concert with the WVU Steel Band. The repertoire for this concert included Narell’s Panorama-style arrangement of his composition, “We Kinda Music.” This was the first long, challenging piece the WVU band attempted. “It was a blast playing it; plus, I got to stand next to Narell on stage. I was in heaven!”

When Tanner was preparing to graduate from WVU, he was looking for graduate programs that either had steel bands in place, or where he could establish one. He found the latter at Miami University, and entered the Master’s program in 1993. Miami’s first pans were built by Mannette and arrived in the spring of 1994. The first concert that involved the steel band was a “HUGE hit.” Tanner finished his Masters in 1996, became a visiting instructor at Miami, and pursued his doctorate through WVU. Once he finished his terminal degree, Miami’s music department turned his position into a tenure-track position, which was searched in the spring of 2001. To date, only Liam Teague at Northern Illinois University and Tanner at Miami occupy full-time university positions that have steel band or pan as their primary duty. “When I put it in those terms, it seems pretty significant. I therefore feel a strong sense of responsibility as the occupant of this particular faculty position.”

Indeed, the accomplishments of the Miami

119 Ibid.
University Steel Band under the direction of Chris Tanner are noteworthy. The MU Steel Band has produced four studio compact disc recordings, all through Pan Ramajay Productions, which are available worldwide on iTunes and Amazon.com. The band has grown from ten members and five instruments in 1994 to over 45 members and twenty-four instruments. (Figure 1)

As an individual, Tanner has become a successful composer and arranger, with a few commissions (mostly by high school groups) and a body of published works through Pan Ramajay Productions and Engine Room Publishing. He also believes his work as a clinician is important. By working with steel bands around the country, is able to share what he has learned about steel band and educate others. “I am very thankful for the opportunities I have had to visit other bands and work/perform with them. I feel it is important; that is why I make it a point to invite an outside clinician to work with my own program at least once a year (usually twice: once each semester).”

As a pedagogue, Tanner’s most significant achievement in American steel band education has arguably been his book, *The Steel Band Game Plan*. He wanted to write this book because he sensed a serious need in the United States for a clear, simple approach to starting a steel band. It is his sincere hope that the book fills that need. “Let me be clear: I do not believe my book has all the answers. It is a start. I hope others will add to the body of steel band pedagogy in the future, because I feel that the demand for such pedagogy certainly exists.”

Tanner’s assertion that there is a need and demand for steel band pedagogy in the United States implies that there is a critical mass of interest in pan intersecting with unprepared steel band educators, as though the attraction has outpaced or outnumbered the sources of knowledge;

---

120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
this implication is reminiscent of Rowsey’s concerns that there are not enough craftsmen to support the growing interest in pan in the United States. Moreover, this suggests a desire for a more systematic pedagogical approach to the steel pan, further indicating the steelpan art form is legitimate enough to warrant nationwide, educational and pedagogical consideration.

Concurrently, Tanner acknowledges the importance of information exchange through expert interactions. Clinicians are valuable, human resources that both inspire and educate students in ways that written text cannot. Each of these methods helps connect bands and their musicians, and combats a sense of isolation between bands.
In the case of Chris Tanner and the Miami University Steel Band, Mannette has been an important resource for instruments, music, history, pedagogy, Trinidadian cultural connection, and character inspiration.

Family Tree

The Ellie Mannette family tree of university and institutional steel bands begins with the Narell family. Murray’s son Jeff founded and directed the steel band program at the University of California – Berkeley, in conjunction with the jazz ensembles program, from 1985 to 1995, until funding ceased. Ethnomusicologist and steelpan scholar Shannon Dudley started the steel band at the University of Washington around 1998. Mannette and Andy Narell inspired pan educator Tony McCutchen in his early days with the instrument, and he went on to found bands at the University of Georgia in 1986 and Jacksonville State University in 2010. University of Florida percussion professor and Sunshine Steelers director, Kenneth Broadway, completed all three of his degrees with McCutchen at UGA, and founded the Sunshine Steelers at the University of Florida in 1998. Allen Teel also studied with McCutchen at UGA, and subsequently established the steel band at Abilene Christian University in 1992. In turn, Teel student Kenyon Williams founded the steel band at Minnesota State University – Moorhead.

Mannette’s tenure at West Virginia University has resulted in the establishment of new, university housed steel bands in other locations. WVU alumni Chris Tanner and Kurry Seymour

123 Jeff Narell, email message to author, September 16, 2011.

124 Trinidadian pannist Ray Holman helped Dudley establish the UW steel band. Holman was a Visiting Artist at UW from 1998 to 2000. Since that time, Dudley has directed the band.


126 Thomas McCutchen, email message to author, September 20, 2011.
initiated bands at Miami University in 1994, and Coastal Carolina University in 2003, respectfully. In turn, Miami alumnus Patrick Hernly founded the Indiana University steel band in 2002, and the Hillsborough Community College – Ybor City campus steel band in Tampa, Florida in 2012. (Figure 2).

In each of the aforementioned cases, the establishers of new bands had their first significant pan experience as students in a university environment. Moreover, Mannette’s influence has directly and indirectly contributed to countless other steel bands as an instrument craftsman and inspiration, including the Eastern Kentucky University steel band, which has been directed by MU and WVU alumnus Jason Koontz since 2000; Howard University (mentioned later in this chapter) and Florida State University.

Edward Said’s notion that “what mattered was not Asia, so much as Asia’s use to modern Europe,” neatly ties into tropicalism in this section. Although pan is becoming more legitimized through its incorporation into numerous university programs, these programs are simultaneously using pan for their own advantage. Oberlin has historically been a leader in collegiate education for marginalized groups, and through pan they continue to promote their multicultural endeavors. The University of North Texas percussion program has used pan to remain cutting edge in the realm of world percussion. High school groups in Florida may have used pan to promote tropical vacation escapism, while Bill King in Rome, GA, noted a steel band was “comprised of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voiced instruments,” making the West the norm. West Virginia University

127 Kurry Seymour, text message to author, September 15, 2011.


129 Jason Koontz, text message to author, September 15, 2011.
embraced Mannette as a culture bearer, which lends a particular legitimacy to their program—a type they fulfilled with other culture bearers directing other world music ensembles. At Miami University, pan advertises multiculturalism and diversity, which can be viewed as paradoxical as the majority of their 45 members are Caucasian. Much as the Orient was “useful” to the West in the initiatives of Orientalism, pan was and remains useful to American academic institutions as both a propagation and antidote to the agendas of tropicalism.

**Historically Significant University Pan Programs Less Influenced by Mannette**

Outside of the programs more directly linked with Ellie Mannette, historic collegiate pan programs at Howard University, Northern Illinois University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Akron have also significantly affected the collegiate steel band movement, and discussion of their importance is thus warranted. Important figures in this history, including G. Allan O’Connor, Clifford Alexis, Liam Teague, Thomas Siwe, and Larry Snider, are discussed both within the specific study of collegiate pan developments and in the larger framework of pan in the United States beyond collegiate environs.

Northern Illinois University established a university-supported steel band in 1973.\(^{130}\) This program is inextricably linked to those at the University of Illinois and the University of Akron; their histories are closely connected and remain entangled today. Each university ensemble has produced numerous graduates that continue work in the steel band idiom as directors, ensemble members, composers, arrangers, instrument builders and tuners, and scholars. Each band has a unique history that warrants its own detailed study, but the influence of these programs and individuals are not the focus of this dissertation.

\(^{130}\) In 1973, steel band became a course students could take for credit.
Steel band programs at historically black colleges and universities have rarely received attention in academic publications. The reasons for this may include lack of documented information, difficulty in contacting previous members, program isolation, or any combination thereof. I add to the literature by including information on the now-dissolved band affiliated with Howard University, chosen both for its founding (at least ten years prior to the Northern Illinois band) and its connection with Ellie Mannette (a major focus of my project). Unlike the Northern Illinois University cohort, the Howard band was primarily comprised of West Indians having prior experience with, or at least inherent knowledge of, pan.

**Howard University**

The Trinidad Steelband was founded in 1959 by George Lawrence, a Trinidadian engineering student in need of money for tuition at Howard University (Johnson 1963:114). Although the university did not officially support it, the approximately six-member Trinidad Steelband was comprised entirely of Howard students who performed as a way to earn money. In 1963, the Texaco Oil Company agreed to provide scholarships to pay tuition for band members Keith Preddie, Ruthven Thomas, Gordon Zephrin, Malcolm Weeks, Carlos Paul, and “Smokey” Graves.\(^\text{131}\) This form of corporate support is similar to companies sponsoring entire bands in Trinidad for Panorama. The Texaco endowment resulted after the wife of an executive heard the Trinidad Steelband at an embassy performance and convinced her husband to provide them each with scholarships. The band accepted the support and painted their drums with Texaco trademark colors.\(^\text{132}\) The band performed for a wide range of social events from student dances to functions.

---

\(^{131}\) Ronald C. Emrit, email message to author, January 14, 2011. Emrit is a former member of the Howard steel band.

\(^{132}\) Keith Preddie, email message to author, September 27, 2011.
Ellie Mannette

Born 1927 – Moved to the United States 1967
(Artist-in-Residence, West Virginia University, 1991-present)

Figure 2: The development of steel bands in U.S. universities as influenced by Ellie Mannette – historical influences and teacher-student connections

133 Allen Teel, email message to author, February 10, 2014.
Hubert Humphrey, and at the inaugural parade for President Richard Nixon.\textsuperscript{134} After Lawrence graduated, the band continued its association with Howard University; as one musician left, another would take his place.

Little is known about the repertoire performed by the Howard University steel band, but it may be assumed that it reflected the choices of many Trinidadian immigrants. That is, their musical selections were a mix of calypsos, socas, and other tunes currently popular in the West Indies combined with commercial pop tunes, standards, and Harry Belafonte songs favored by U.S. listeners. The legitimacy of these musicians would be considered quite high to most audience members, particularly Washington dignitaries with lengthy ancestry in the United States. For the uninitiated U.S. listener, the sheer fact that the performers were West Indian would be enough to be considered legitimate. However, had the band played Belafonte songs at a Howard student dance, they likely would not be viewed with the same level of legitimacy as their audience would be more familiar with representative steel band repertoire. As serious musicians, it was important for members of the Trinidad Steel Band to stay “true” to their art in terms of repertoire and representation, as well as consider the preferences of their audiences regarding the “show.”

The twin roles of music as artistic and commercial endeavors are certainly not limited to the realm of steelpan. In her article on Beale Street blues in Memphis, Jennifer Ryan observes, “Most musicians are not ‘abandoning’ authenticity for ‘material ends’ (i.e., ‘selling out’); that is a quest they never took up in the first place,” (2011:488). Therefore restricting the view to either art or commerce minimizes the broad spectrum of the relationship between art and business. The

colloquialism *sellout*, referencing how an artist was “real” before he or she compromised his or her art for financial gain, is essentially an antonym for legitimate; it is also a prevalent term in pop music. When a musician sells out listeners may consider him or her a phony, and those who do not nuance the connection between the two no longer consider his or her music meaningful or legitimate. “The fact is that all entertainers try to please their audiences, and the successful ones are experts at figuring out what an audience wants. The great blues singers were pros, not primitives,” (Wald 2004:69). Similarly, students at Howard University played likely played different repertoire and possibly dressed differently, depending on the performance and audience expectations.

**Northern Illinois University**

Roughly sixty-five miles west of Chicago, in DeKalb, Illinois, is Northern Illinois University – home of what is commonly recognized to be the first university-supported steel band program. In 1973, G. Allan O’Connor (Remy 1994:29) founded the band and acquired instruments from Aruba through a private student. O’Connor first encountered steel drums during his final semester of graduate work at the University of Illinois, which was a center for experimental music at that time. He claims the “infectious rhythms”135 lured him. Appointed percussion professor of Northern Illinois University in 1968, O’Connor felt he should expose his students to pan and Caribbean music styles, hoping to increase their rhythmic, harmonic, and stylistic abilities as musicians. O’Connor taught himself to play and transcribed music from recordings until he located other pannists, instrument builders, and tuners from whom to learn.

---

Around 1983, he went to a high school twenty-five miles northwest of DeKalb to hear the U.S. Navy Steel Band in concert. The Navy Band's director led O'Connor to the master Trinidadian pannist Clifford Alexis, who by that time was residing in Minnesota. O’Connor persuaded Alexis to help with the NIU program by running rehearsals and maintaining instruments. After assuming the duties of Assistant Chair of the School of Music in 1985, O’Connor officially hired Alexis as an on-staff builder, tuner, arranger, and co-director for the band. According to O'Connor, the addition of Alexis to the program “made everything take off.”

In 1987, a steel drum degree program was developed, which eventually attracted Trinidadian pan virtuoso Liam Teague. Now on the faculty, Teague is co-director of the program. The West Indian-NIU connection remains strong, with numerous Trinidadian students traveling to study abroad at NIU, then returning home to teach music and continue playing pan.

The Chicago-based Lester Trilla Steel Drum Corporation has made this exchange program possible. As of 2003, Trilla had given the program over 300,000 dollars, primarily for international student scholarships.

Within the geographic area of DeKalb and Chicago, the Northern Illinois University Steel Band has performed numerous educational programs at public schools, and previously the “little band” of approximately seven people performed club dates, block parties, and weddings. As an internationally recognized figure in the pan movement Al O’Connor has assisted in founding ensembles in New Zealand and Taiwan; in 1989, O’Connor and Alexis received an invitation from Pan Trinbago to observe and critique the School Children’s Pan Festival (National Schools

---

136 Al O’Connor, interview by author, April 9, 2003.

137 For example, Harold Headley is percussion and steelpan instructor at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad; Satanand Sharma is professor of music at the University of the West Indies; Neville York holds the highest ranking position in government relating to music in St. Maarten, West Indies, and is also performing on steel pans.
Steelband Festival); adjudicated Trinidad’s Steel Band festival “Pan is Beautiful IV” in 1992; have received seven grants from the United States National Endowment for the Arts; written many original compositions and arrangements for steel band; helped lead the Northern Illinois Steel Band to 2nd place at the World Steelband Music Festival in Trinidad in 2000; and in the spring of 2003, the ensemble performed their thirtieth anniversary spring concert with internationally recognized calypsonian and guest artist, David Rudder. Since that time, the NIU steel band program essentially functions the same with the primary difference being an increased performance of student compositions and arrangements, rather than the vast majority of repertoire being composed or arranged by Alexis or Teague.

The steel band activities at Northern Illinois University have influenced the establishment of more than fifty college and university steel bands in the United States and Canada, particularly through instrument and music resources. Teague has stated, “Al [O’Connor] is responsible for beginning the steel band movement in American universities…” (Holly 1995: 38). Many NIU-associated bands use drums manufactured by Alexis, including those at the universities of Illinois, Western Illinois, and Hartford (Nurse 2007: 211-12). NIU’s band has performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention more than any other steel band in the country (Nurse 2007: 227), and publishing company Pan Press Inc. was founded by alumnus Paul Ross. Alumni have also played a part in founding and leading student groups, as well as gig bands. Educational ensembles with connections to NIU-related pannists have included Florida State University, Leon High School in Tallahassee, Florida, Waubonsee Community College.

---

138 David Rudder is a famous Trinidadian calypsonian who resides in Toronto, Canada.
139 Mia Gormandy, email message to author, March 19, 2015.
140 Al O’Connor, Clifford Alexis, and Liam Teague, interview by author, April 7, 2003.
Steel Band, Arizona State University, Indian Prairie School District 204, University of Kentucky, University of Arizona, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, Idaho State University, Elgin Community College, College of Lake County, Central State University, Genoa-Kingston High School, University of the West Indies – St. Augustine, Harper College, Egedal Music School in Denmark, the Rhythm Project and PAN Caribbean Music Fest supported by the Virginia Arts Festival, and Pan Masters Steel Orchestra in the DC metro area. Additionally, the Birch Creek Summer Workshop, co-established by Ithaca College steel band founder Gordon Stout, has promoted pan as an integral part of their percussion program since the mid-1980s with the help of staff members Al O’Connor and Liam Teague. NIU students have served as teaching assistants for the summer camp.

Commercially, NIU alumni have formed gigging bands in locales including Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas (Sweet Steel); Los Angeles, California (Calypso Pirates); Chicago, Illinois (Jamaican Breeze, Pan Go, Beach Bum Band, LaSte’); San Diego, California (Sweet Steel); Miami, Florida (Doug Up); and Connecticut (East Shore Caribbean Jazz).

The Northern Illinois University Steel Band has continued to make the connection with Trinidadian and West Indian culture a priority. Alexis and Teague are revered for their skills and as culture bearers, Trilla scholarships concentrate on West Indian students (Nurse 2007), and participation in Trinidadian performance-based competitions is a source of pride for the program.


143 Unless otherwise noted, NIU pan lineage information was obtained through email correspondence with Dave Longfellow, Elizabeth Delamater, Gordon Stout, James Campbell, Jeannine Remy, and Steve Butters.

As Northern Illinois University alumni have fostered and continued educational and professional steel band pursuits in the United States, graduates have infiltrated nearly every arena of pan-related activities: commercial performance, education, scholarship, and sheet music publication, both nationally and internationally.

University of Illinois

Thomas Siwe came to the University of Illinois School of Music as a student in the early 1950s, and later, in 1969, joined the School’s faculty as director of the percussion program. He had always been interested in new timbres. Siwe’s initial exposure to steel band music came during his student days when he discovered pirated tapes of Trinidadian bands and Caribbean music collections at the UI music library. He recalls, however, that “the crude tuning and clunky sound of the steel drum combos heard on these recordings was not very pleasing.”

In the mid-1960s, Siwe rented two lead pans from Drums Limited in Chicago to perform “Underworld,” by Illinois composer Sal Martirano. In the composition, the drums were used for timbral effect rather than exact pitches. Finally, in the mid-1970s, Siwe’s student, Mike Friedman, presented him with a tape of Jimmy Leyden’s New York Chappaqua High School steel band. Siwe found “…the sound and musicality of Jim’s group [to be] simply amazing.”

Siwe became interested in bringing a similar musical experience to his percussion majors.

The UI steel band was founded to help percussion students learn about a tradition of music far removed from that of the Western art music culture that was their mainstay, and to learn musicianship skills more generally: “different musical styles, history of the literature, phrasing, line, ensemble, [and] listening…develop their aural skills [sometimes weak in

145 Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 7, 2010.

146 Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 4, 2010.
freshmen percussion majors] and learn something about the cultures of the [C]aribbean islands.\textsuperscript{148} The UI School of Music was neither interested in nor able to fund his musical aspirations, so Siwe purchased two lead pans and a set of double tenors, double seconds, cellos, and basses from Murray Narell in California for $500 in 1976.\textsuperscript{149}

Illinois alumnus Al O’Connor helped start the band as a pedagogical tool. He demonstrated proper playing technique, taught students “Everybody Loves Saturday Night” with basic harmonic accompaniment strum patterns, and explained methods for constructing simple

\textsuperscript{147} This and subsequent similar charts in this chapter focus solely on the founding of collegiate steel band programs, as prompted by the original collegiate program in which the student first learned to play steelpan.

\textsuperscript{148} Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 14, 2010.

\textsuperscript{149} These original pans were crafted by Ellie Mannette.
arrangements of so-called island tunes. Early UI steel band members transcribed music from the Leyden tape, while both Siwe and students arranged popular and island tunes. Once available, published music was purchased, some of which was composed and arranged by UI alumni. Eventually Jack McKenzie, Dean of the College of Fine Arts, helped fund new steel drums crafted by Clifford Alexis, who continues to service the instruments.

University of Illinois steel band activities are exclusively available to percussion majors and other university percussion ensemble members, and have contributed to a broader steel band conversation within the United States. Since the mid-1970s, the band has “played for tens of thousands of people throughout Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and many places south to Florida. The band was invited to play for the 10th Anniversary of Disney World in 1982 and made a number of tours south during spring breaks.” Within the local community the band gives concerts at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, is hired for evening formal events, and provides educational outreach through public school assemblies. Performance attire is a band-designed tee shirt. A smaller version of the full band, known as I-Pan, was started in response to the numerous performance requests received by the UI steel band. I-Pan is student run, providing professional experience for members in repertoire selection, booking, and finances; the band plays at local clubs and parties, and has produced at least two CDs.

Numerous UI alumni have continued contributing to the U.S. pan movement after graduation by either starting or directing their own education-based steel bands, or as a more economically-driven, commercial ensemble. The original set of UI instruments was sold to the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago to establish a new band. Alumni have established

150 Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 18, 2010.
151 Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 4, 2010.
and taught bands in public schools in Vero Beach, Florida and Tempe, Arizona (Corona del Sol), and at the University of Akron, Western Illinois University, the University of Alabama-Birmingham, Elgin Community College in Illinois, the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, San Jacinto College Central in Texas, and Idaho State University. More commercially, UI alumni have performed on cruise ships and formed gigging bands in locales including Chicago, Illinois (Magnetic Monster Steel Band, Steel Express and Pan Chicago); Urbana-Champaign, Illinois; South Padre Island, Texas (Bongodogs and SPI-Pan); Tucson, Arizona (Pan Dulce); Pasadena, Texas (Tropic Envo); Atlanta, Georgia (Touch of Steel); and Louisville, Kentucky (Caribe).¹⁵²

As University of Illinois alumni have sustained and advanced steel band activities within educational institutions and professional commercial groups in the United States, their pursuits have not emphasized connections to Trinidad or diasporic communities. Rather, their efforts are focused within their particular locations. Siwe remains a connecting thread; otherwise, most bands seem relatively solitary without much involvement with programs outside their own. Exceptions to this include the Kemah Pan Jam Festival in Pasadena, Texas and an invitation from Siwe for regional steel bands to perform with UI in concert.¹⁵³ This joint concert also functioned as preparation for the mass steel band performance at the 1987 Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in St. Louis.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Unless otherwise noted, UI pan lineage information was obtained through email correspondence with Bruce Doctor, Eric Hines, Eric Hollenbeck, Erica A. Montgomery, Mike Mizma, Peggy Benkeser, Rick Kurasz, Ron Hughes, Scott Werner, Steve Butters, Thomas Siwe, and Will Parsons.

¹⁵³ Originally set up by Mike Mizma’s Tropic Envoy partner, Jeff Gleason. Since 2002, this festival has donated proceeds to help local college steel bands. Mike Mizma, email message to author, December 29, 2010.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 23, 2010.
With a more comprehensive perspective on the dissemination of the steel pan, Siwe noted that whether in concert halls, television commercials, pop music, or collegiate programs, increased interest in pan is tied into a “multi-cultural movement in [A]merican society. I really don't know if pan has reached much of Asia or Europe.”\textsuperscript{155} His viewpoint emphasizes what is happening in the United States and deemphasizes multicultural exchange.

\textsuperscript{155} Thomas Siwe, email message to author, December 23, 2010.
Founded in 1980 by Larry Snider, the University of Akron Steel Drum Band was born from Snider’s experiences as a student at the University of Illinois. Those “rusted old steel drums” put “a smile on [everyone’s] face,” because “it was a lot more fun” than traditional Western percussion. Initially, both the university president and Cliff Alexis rejected Snider’s idea to form a steel band. Alexis’ reservation was that Snider was “another white American who want[ed] to have a novelty instrument at [his] university to bring students in…,” but Snider’s persistence prevailed. Snider had assured Alexis that his Akron students would learn about the history and culture behind the steelpan. To get the band started, Siwe and one of his TAs traveled to Akron to demonstrate playing techniques and instrument care. Within the first couple of years students including Tom Miller, Joan Wenzel, and Ben Toth, began guiding the artistic direction of the band by transcribing and arranging Lord Kitchener tunes, rather than Belafonte selections.

In the late 1980s, student Shelly Irvine took over artistic direction as a part time position, followed by graduate student Rick Kurasz, and now by Matt Dudack who started his graduate studies in 1996. Dudack himself first learned pan in 1992 as an undergraduate at The Hartt School, founded that same year by Akron graduate Ben Toth.

Participation in steel band is required for all percussion performance and music education majors with a percussion concentration. Its personnel includes approximately twenty-three members each year. Some students also take pan lessons, which may focus on improvising, or enroll in a steel pan history and arranging class that can result in publication with Mau Mau Music. Pragmatically, pan is used as a means for addressing tone, rhythm, phrasing, interpretation, and ensemble playing. Steel band is a huge fundraiser and a flagship program for

---

156 All information in the University of Akron section is a product of my personal interview with Matt Dudack on December 21, 2010 unless otherwise noted.
the school. The students produce a professional stage show, with unionized stage-hands, at fifteen dollars a tickets, for an audience of 2000 people every year. In order to prepare students for gigging outside of college, Dudack makes the experience “as hard as possible.” There are no note names written in the pans, everything is memorized from sheet music, significant music changes are made at the last minute to “screw” with the students because Dudack contends this method is true to real-world gigging. To his credit, alumni have thanked him for “screw[ing] with me that one time” by changing keys, because that happened in the alumnus’ professional experience.

The Akron steel band primarily focuses on their annual April concert. Repertoire centers on newer calypsos, original compositions, classical arrangements, panoramas, pop tunes, and may vary depending on guest artists such as Boogsie Sharpe, Ray Holman, Robert Greenidge and Andy Narell. The band also performs for Akron’s First Night (New Years) celebration where they perform, facilitate hands-on demonstrations, and discuss pan history. Every three or four years the band participates in a children’s concert series for all Summit country fourth graders. The students also perform for a many in-school assemblies and do a lot of small group gigging, which is excellent on-the-job training in terms of learning plenty of literature, negotiating contracts, and interpersonal professionalism. In addition, Akron has released the documentary *Hammer on Steel*, a history of early pan men.\(^{157}\) The DVD, a $100,000 project, was funded entirely by community donations.

One of Akron’s biggest supporters is Dr. William Demas, an Akron radiologist originally from Trinidad. A major financial backer of the DVD project, Demas also set up a scholarship for a Trinidadian pannist to study international business at the University of Akron to then return

---

\(^{157}\) Dudack noted that interviewees were those Cliff Alexis thought most important. They were unable to interview Ellie Mannette, and were also constrained by the short, four-day filming period in Trinidad.
home to help Pan Trinbago organize and promote pan more effectively.\textsuperscript{158} Other ties between local area Trinidadians and the Akron steel band include “The Trini Posse,” a group of Trinidadians who coordinate family members from Chicago and New York to not only attend the Akron concert, but also cook an enormous meal for students and fans.

Dudack asserts approximately one-third of the estimated one hundred Akron percussion graduates are still involved in pan in some way. Snider sends a newsletter to band alumni roughly every other year to stay connected. Initially, Dudack referred to alumnus-run steel bands as “satellite bands,” but then amended his designation to “other bands” demonstrating a strong fellowship between the Akron group and its progeny. Some of these bands include Joan Wentzel’s high school band in Dover, Ohio; Eastern New Mexico University, the University of Montana, the University of Massachusetts – Dartmouth; The Hartt School, the University of Denver, Miller South School for the Fine Arts in Akron, Ohio; Heavenly Metal Steel Band; and the University of North Texas. Other pan-related activities initiated by Akron involvement are the Ohio Valley Festival of Steel, Mau Mau Music publishing company, Panyard, Inc. publishing company, and Pan Ramajay – the name of both a publishing company and a performance group.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{158} Pan Trinbago is the governing body of pan activities in Trinidad and Tobago; Keron Valentine who worked with Woodbrook Playboyz Steel Band in Trinidad came to Akron, completed his degree, and then became Youth Officer of Pan Trinbago.

While the Akron steel band keeps close relations with some programs, it is quite unconnected with others, some of which are much closer, geographically. For example, Kent State University and Oberlin College are fifteen miles and sixty miles from Akron, respectively. Dudack asserts he enjoys collaboration, but tends to team up with high school groups. College bands often have logistical difficulties in working together including differing philosophies or organizational techniques, or a lack of association with one another because of rotating directorships. Dudack also contends that some of the disassociation may be an ego matter, “This is my band. I don’t wanna deal with your band, which kind of goes back to Trinidad,” and a phenomenon that may be traced back to immigrant tuners like Alexis and Mannette. Snider has instilled a sense of family and loyalty among Akron alumni; you do not cross your brother, and you have a responsibility to your community.

The Akron steel band places great importance on professionalism, cultural history, and allegiance. Students are expected to have a high level of musicianship and adaptability in performance situations. Cultural history is woven throughout rehearsal sessions when prominent artists such as Cliff Alexis, Boogsie Sharpe, Ray Holman, and Robert Greenidge work with the band. Through regular association with culture bearers, musicians have received validation for their work. Diasporic community members, such as the “Trini Posse,” are considered experts regarding the musical output of the band. Dudack noted one of the best compliments he has received was from a “GIANT Trinidadian guy” who said “man, where’d you learn to play iron like that?” In turn, Dudack’s assessment was “Really? That was like ah..I guess I’m there! This

---

160 Oberlin Steel has been directed by a student since its inception in 1980.

161 There is a mural in Dudack’s office featuring two pannen: Cliff Alexis and Ken “Professor” Philmore. Dudack commented, “My two favorite people are right here, always looking over my shoulder.”
The elevated importance of the emic perspective is not exclusive to the University of Akron Steel Drum Band.

The steel band programs at Northern Illinois University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Akron are historically linked. Therefore, degrees of continuity and change can be scrutinized. The NIU and Akron bands place a relatively high value on Trinidadian cultural history and diasporic communities, compared to the University of Illinois, which philosophically connects pan to the multicultural nature of society in the United States. This may be a consequence of the degree to which each program is linked to Cliff Alexis, and the loyalty therein. As mentioned by Dudack, there is to some extent, a difference between the “Cliff School” and the “Ellie School,” at times considered rival camps. To quote Dudack, “can I do something with an Ellie Mannette band? What’s going to happen? Cliff’s going to kick my ass! [But then you realize,] that’s not going to happen.”\footnote{Matt Dudack, personal interview, December 21, 2010.} This may be an example of Trinidadian instrument craftsmen rivalries that have come stateside. Furthermore, rival camp differences between Alexis and Mannette may stem from Alexis’ focus on highlighting the Trinidadian cultural connection, while Mannette’s emphasis is the instrument itself. In this light, we can view each as panman and craftsman, respectively.

NIU and Akron both focus on a single, annual concert, and periodic educational and community outreach performances. Each also maintains close contact with Trinidadians and facilitates cultural exchange through scholarships and audience attendance, while UI’s activities seem more focused on pan in the United States. Individuals and businesses from their respective communities privately fund scholarships at both NIU and Akron, and artistic projects such as Hammer on Steel. Directors at both of these institutions compose and arrange much of their own repertoire, particularly NIU, which creates nearly their entire repertoire in-house. Steel band is
exclusive to percussion students at UI and Akron, (required for Akron students); steel band opportunities are accessible for all students at NIU. Music is memorized for the annual Akron concert, but not at NIU. The origin story for each group has a slightly different emphasis: infectious rhythms inspired Al O’Connor, student enthusiasm encouraged Larry Snider, and Tom Siwe was in search of a particular sound quality. There are two commonalities among all three universities. First, each has student-run gig groups that provide experience in performance, logistics, organization, and audience relations. Second, each university steel band program has inspired and educated their students enough to allow the continuation of steelpan activities throughout the United States and abroad. Alumni are able to establish new bands at various educational institutions and community centers, continue already existent directorships, create publishing companies, and form professional gigging ensembles after their academic experiences.

Legitimacy concerns for the non-culture bearing steelpan personnel at these Midwestern universities differ in certain regards from those of students affiliated with Howard University. As non-culture bearers, musicians and directors have sought validation through connections with culture bearers either as clinicians, audience or community members, and as fellow ensemble constituents. If those “experts” approve of their academic steelpan representations – musically and visually – then their work is legitimate from that particular cultural perspective. Promoting communication between non-culture bearers, Trinidadians, and other West Indians continues to authenticate these programs, as well as encourage a healthy discourse between diverse groups. Moreover, the serious loyalties shown to pan teachers such as Cliff Alexis emulate the concept of allegiances in Trinidad, making these U.S. teacher-student-band consortiums legitimate in that they reflect similar alliances in Trinidad.
In terms of tropicalism, we should also consider the use of pan by these institutions for their own gains, as well as the power they acquire in having a pan program. First, it is interesting to note in the case of Howard University that the steel band was never officially a part of the university curriculum. This could have been because the university did not find it a worthwhile activity to support or that they were logistically unable to do so, or it may have been because the band members did not find value in aligning the group with an academic institution. As their local community already supported pan, the Trinidadian and West Indian musicians may have chosen to remain in control their own activities rather than to have their activities be directed by the university. When a university supports an activity, society grants legitimacy to it, but this was not a type of legitimacy that the Howard musicians would have needed, as they were in demand regardless.

Al O’Connor at Northern Illinois University was drawn to “the infectious rhythms” he heard when he first heard a steel band. In making that statement he implies that people like the music specifically because it is different, much as the Hawaiian music craze of the early 20th century described by Garrett was spawned largely by its musical differentness (2008). That is, the novelty makes it a success. In fact, this may be a reason why steel bands in the U.S. often remain isolated even when geographically close, because having connections to other bands makes their own programs less unique, and ultimately reduces the special identity of each individual involved with that band. The University of Akron uses their steel band to showcase the legitimate nature of their large, multicultural, polyphonic ensemble by shunning island tunes. They receive financial gains by way of highly successful end-of-semester concerts, and may continue to encourage the “Trinidadian rivalry mentality” to boost their feeling of exclusivity. Each of these situations helps in attracting new students to the Akron percussion program by
promoting it as competitive, elite, and distinctive. Fundamentally, the tropicalism of academic knowledge generates power over pan activities, not only within university systems but also across the greater pan movement throughout the U.S. because educational institutions and their pan programs have become the defining institutions of the U.S. pan movement overall.

Conclusion

The international expansion of steelpan has strengthened its degree of legitimacy through academic, professional, and community applications, and given pan further stability as an instrument and art form. “Having foreigners wanting to…play brings a new level of legitimacy to pan,” according to Trinidadian pannist and pan composer, Ray Holman, because it “shows the rest of the world recognizes the importance of the pan movement” (Kerns and Irvine 1992:32). Educational pioneers of U.S. pan including Ellie Mannette, Al O’Connor, Cliff Alexis, Tom Siwe, and Larry Snider have taken various approaches to pedagogy with greater and lesser emphases on cultural continuity and change, and craftsmanship. Ultimately, each of these men has contributed to the overall shape of pan in the United States. In some respects, the ‘schools’ of Mannette and Alexis have merged and complemented each other. For example, each honors a “dual premise of cultural salvage and academic prestige” (2009:313), which Judah Cohen argues gives students a more complete knowledge of the subject matter, by maintaining a perpetual relationship with culture bearers such as Mannette, Teague, and Alexis. Indeed that connection is part of their academic tradition. Directors also tout the high level of their students’ musicianship by way of gigging and arranging opportunities, popularity and regularity of their performances, and/or memorizing music, all of which are of prime importance for institutional music programs. In other ways, each “school” remains distinct and “competitive” perhaps in a more traditional
Trinidadian fashion. This may be best illustrated by Matt Dudack’s quote, “can I do something with an Ellie Mannette band? What’s going to happen? Cliff’s going to kick my ass!” While many of these sentiments have lessened over time, there is still a dedication that many students, and now teachers, have to their university lineage, particularly when directly involved in some way with either Mannette or Alexis via workshop, craftsmanship, regular instruction, as guest artist, or through recurring stories passed down from teacher to student.
CHAPTER 4
EXTERNAL ENTITIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON U.S. UNIVERSITY PAN PROGRAMS

Introduction

The commercialization of pan in the United States has been a defining factor of the nation’s steelpan culture since the instrument’s arrival in this country. Commodified largely in connection with “tropical paradise” themes, tourism (especially in Florida), and advertising campaigns, pan’s conspicuous presence in media imagery and the American consumer marketplace has spilled over into the academic sphere of collegiate steel band culture and is therefore an important aspect of this dissertation. Both today and historically, musicians, educational institutions, and corporations alike have relied on overlapping, mutually reinforcing, and sometimes identical concepts and stereotypes that connect pan to a “tropical” popular imaginary in ways that impact everything from the performance attire worn by university steel band groups to Disney marketing strategies. With respect to collegiate pan programs, it is notable that some attempt to eschew the pervasive stereotypes that have developed along with the U.S. pan movement itself, whereas others explicitly capitalize on such stereotypes to increase their popular appeal and audiences. As with so much else in the pan world, issues of legitimacy and accessibility loom large in the debates and decisions surrounding such practices.

This chapter addresses such issues of pan’s popular commodification, while also exploring other realms of pan’s commercial culture that are alternately enmeshed in or resistant to their commodifying forces. These include pan sheet music publishing, instrument craftsmen and craftsmanship, and overarching discourses surrounding what constitutes “legitimate” and “authentic” repertoire, both within and beyond the context of U.S university pan programs.
Steel Band Music in Florida and the Commodification of Pan

An early and notable connection between pan in the U.S. and so-called tropical paradise themes developed in the state of Florida. During the 1950s and 1960s, Trinidadians and other West Indians, who were drawn by economic opportunities and the attractively familiar subtropical climate, began immigrating to Florida in large numbers. Steel pan activity in the state increased during these decades and Florida subsequently became an important center for pannists. It was a distinctive and uniquely commercial musical milieu. Grenadian Clifton Worm moved to Florida in 1958 “as part of a labor pool of West Indians hired to work citrus groves around Orlando” (App 1997: 35). Eventually Worm began building steel drums and formed a band, which labor managers supported once they realized it boosted workers’ morale. In fact, his performances led to a favorable relationship with labor manager Bill Story, who made it possible for Worm to continue to build and play steel drums. Worm preferred Winter Garden, Florida, because, by 1961, “there were over 1000 men from the islands [there]…” (App 1997: 36). In terms of how tropicalism was employed as a mechanism of postcolonial control, it served as a means of legitimized marginalization as waves of Caribbean immigrants came to the U.S. The promotion of “the islands” through simplistic pan music similarly represented pannists as laid back, non-threatening, and lazy people. Through such convergences of marginalizing stereotypes, the agenda of tropicalism validated the marginality of Caribbean immigrants to the United States.

As tourism was already Florida’s largest industry, the steelpan, appropriated as a convenient and iconic symbol of the state’s “tropical” brand, was adopted into the consumer market. Florida tourism, throughout its history, has been built on the idea of fantasylands and theme parks (App 1997: 24), taking its cultural cues from the Caribbean rather than the northern

163 Florida has a more temperate climate than New York City.
United States. Moreover, the relationship between Florida and the Caribbean has historically been strengthened by the establishment of Miami as a major port city for cruise lines. Port cities and cruise ships, where many U.S. citizens had their first exposure to a steelband, were designed to imitate a Caribbean, tropical paradise.

Perhaps the most significant event involving tourism, commodification, and steelband movement in Florida was the opening of Disney World’s Magic Kingdom in 1971. The Magic Kingdom’s Caribbean theme park, Islands of Adventure, hired Trinidadian Junior Pouchet and his Silver Stars to provide steelband music for the new attraction. Ellie Mannette had built Pouchet’s first pan around the late 1940s or early 1950s when they both lived in Port-of-Spain in Trinidad (Dudley:2008). The success of this band, which still performs today, likely influenced the hiring of other steelbands in the 1970s at Caribbean-themed venues including Busch Gardens, the Don Caesar Hotel in St. Petersburg Beach, and the Caribbean Gulf Resort on Clearwater Beach.

Lawrence App explains the longstanding relationship between the steel drum and the tourist industry in Florida in this way:

In Florida, the commercial success of many entertainment businesses geared toward a tropical theme is often aided by the commodification of steel band repertories, performance elements, and even the sound and appearance of the pan itself, in which Caribbean performance practices and aesthetic experiences are…maintained and altered to accommodate American, middle-class tastes…the move toward professionalism by pan players has been the most important factor in the development of distinct styles of steel drum music in Florida (xii) … In summary, a substantial number of pan players in Florida have successfully realized their aspirations for professionalism through musical adaptation, flexible performance strategies, and directly accommodating the entertainment industry (209).

This alteration “to accommodate American, middle-class tastes” is akin to the stylized calypsos of The Andrews Sisters and Harry Belafonte and the cultural accessibility of the Navy Steel
Band. Over time, the Caribbean paradise association has not waned, but rather expanded to a much broader and more inclusive association between pan and all things tropical.

Two principal associations within U.S. popular culture have dominated the place of steel band within that culture. One links pan to its urban, underserved street youth origins, whereby the instrument was an outlet for self-expression. This connection is illustrated by popular rapper 50 Cent’s top-ten hit “P.I.M.P.” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDApZhXTpH8), in which a pan sample is looped throughout the song and music video that features expensive cars, homes, and scantily clad women. A second example of this link is demonstrated in a 2002 Caterpillar footwear advertisement (Figure 5). In an attempt to attract young consumers to Caterpillar’s product line, this ad uses imagery that lumps steel band together with a variety of so-called underground, urban activities. It seems that under the proper circumstances, then, steel drums can sell footwear (i.e., assuming that this ad campaign was effective). However, the far more common association that exists for steelpan in U.S. popular culture is with tropical island vacations. In this second use, a form of tropicalism, the conglomeration of tropical and island artifacts, appears to override the specifics of geography and culture. Ethnomusicologist Kazadi wa Mukuna conceptualizes of the process of assimilation, an advanced stage of cultural exchange, to include inventory (what is it?), evaluation (is it useful?), and reinterpretation.\textsuperscript{164} Indeed, as pan has been assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, tropicalist tendencies have come to the fore in its reinterpretation.

Examples of Tropicalism in Mainstream Culture and Educational Institutions

Musicians

Pannists are regularly contracted to perform at “Hawaiian luaus” where the décor generally includes tiki-torches, Hibiscus flowers, and a limbo stick, and where party-goers usually wear floral-print Polynesian shirts, grass skirts, coconut brassieres, and Hawaiian leis. Band members are often encouraged to wear similar festive attire. Songs by Harry Belafonte, Bob Marley, and Jimmy Buffett are popular for different reasons. Belafonte has historical appeal and familiarity; Marley’s reggaes are stylistically accessible, familiar, and “Caribbean.” Jimmy Buffett is one of several musicians to capitalize on “pan-island” sentiments and connotations through the use of steel drums.

Jimmy Buffett is a popular musician with significant ties to Florida. His store, Margaritaville, is in Key West; his radio station, Radio Margaritaville, broadcasts from Orlando, Florida; and he co-founded the charity, Save the Manatee, with former Florida governor Bob Graham. Moreover, his musical style and thematic materials have been described as “beach music” and “Floribbean” (App 139), for Florida combined with Caribbean. His fans, known as Parrotheads, sing along to favorites including “Fins,” “Volcano,” and “A Pirate Looks at Forty.” Some of his compositions, such as “Margaritaville,” have become familiar repertoire for steel bands in the U.S. His band, known as the Corral Reefers, includes Trinidadian pannist Robert Greenidge, who provides the requisite dash of Caribbean musical flavor. Buffett’s songs typically use pan as a background timbre through periodic arpeggiated chords and other brief music riffs, not as a chief melodic instrument. By viewing this clip on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSNxu_405Mk) we can see Buffett donning Jamaican wristbands and a tiki-inspired guitar strap, and his fans wearing leis and straw hats. His
music and visual aids evoke thoughts of relaxation, island getaways, beaches, and alcoholic beverages. While his fan base is relatively diverse in age, it is less diverse in terms of ethnicity.
Concurrently, Key West, Florida singer/songwriter Dave Aaron is working to capture part of this niche market with his moniker “Caribbean Cowboy.” Although his songs are not popular requests for steel bands, Aaron is blatantly merging Caribbean steel drums with country cowboy sound and imagery – perhaps a tall order for a native of Michigan. One example of his conglomerations is “Coconut Cowboy,” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgjepZr08CI). Without the occasional steelpan, the instrumental portion of the song would sound like any other country tune with simple walking bass line and bending guitar notes. While his vocal quality has plenty of southern twang, the subject matter mentions sand, the ocean breeze, islands, pineapple, and coconuts. His music video features a boat marina and coastal roadway; he wears a cowboy hat, informally leaves the top portion of his shirt open, and plays a guitar adorned with a beach scene. Pannist Kayleen Kerg Justus,\(^{165}\) who played with Aaron, recalled the importance of the visual presentation of steel drums. Aaron requested the pannist bring several steel drums for their live performances, even if they were not played. The instruments were used to help create both a visual and aural sense of place – the Caribbean – for the audience.

Buffett’s and Aaron’s songs typically use pan as a background timbre rather than as a significant melodic instrument. However, there are highly visible steel bands in the U.S. that strengthen the connection between pan and tropical paradise getaways. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Junior Pouchet and the Silver Stars had been a part of Disney World’s Magic Kingdom’s Adventureland for close to 38 years. In 1996, after 25 years of relative artistic independence, park administrators imposed a strict, tourist-oriented show on the band. Prior to that time, Junior Pouchet balanced audience favorites with current Trinidadian calypsos in his role as a

bandleader. Nevertheless, the band modified their performance selections and began wearing frayed straw hats and staging limbo contests.\textsuperscript{166}

\section*{Education}

The academy has not been immune to the seductions of pan tropicalism. Rastafarian hats, for example, which bear the colors of Jamaica and include fake dreads, are occasionally worn by steelpannists in the U.S. as a symbol of Caribbean-ness. The University of Oklahoma New Horizons Steel Drum Band wore such hats during their 2011 fall concert, and entered the stage dancing the conga on a conga line (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{167} The OU New Horizons Bands are a part of the personal enrichment division of the University of Oklahoma’s Lifelong Enrichment and Academic Programs that is “dedicated to helping individuals, businesses, groups and communities transform themselves through knowledge.”\textsuperscript{168} These adult students did indeed transform themselves and their audience, not toward a Trinidadian perspective on pan culture, but toward a generically tropicalist one akin to those propagated in tourist and commercial culture. Conga lines are a staple event for U.S. audiences who wish to participate in upbeat pan music, as witnessed at a 2011 steel band concert at Florida State University, “[A] conga line formed throughout the auditorium. The band was met with deafening applause and preceded [sic] with an encore. It was hard to determine which ensemble was the favorite of the night, but it is certainly safe to say FSU students know how to appreciate other cultures.”\textsuperscript{169}


\textsuperscript{167} Rocio Garcia, email message to author, December 19, 2011.

Other examples of tropicalism in educational environments include a flamingo perched atop pans in the Texas State University steel band rehearsal room (Figure 7). As well, the Suzuki Corporation advertisement seen in Figure 8 aligns steel drums with the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, by way of reggae, rather than Trinidad, employing the phrase “Hey mon, be transported to the islands with new Suzuki Drums.” “Mon,” too, is a lexical Jamaican signifier. According to its website, Suzuki Music seeks to “unit[e] the world through the language of music.” As we all know, music is neither a universal nor singular language. The Suzuki Corporation failed to respect the integrity of Caribbean cultural diversity through this blatant display of misleading tropicalism.

**National Advertising Campaigns**

Corporations with substantial advertising budgets can reach a wide audience on television or through other campaigns. Friskies is a cat food company owned by the Nestlé Purina Petcare Company. Their 2012 TV advertisement for Friskies Seafood Sensations (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B38fscQBJ2c & Figure 9) showcases an animated cat walking through several tropical scenes with blue seas, palm trees, and crabs. Musically, the commercial features an arpeggiated synthesized pan track to invoke tropical-ness, in other words, the sound of seafood. This nonspecific “tropical seafood paradise” locale for cats continues its generic impression by using pan as the broad audio indicator. The tag line, “feed the senses,” applies to more than just taste for the cat, but sight and sound for the owner.

---


170 Darren Dyke, text message to author, December 19, 2011.

Chick-fil-A is a fast food restaurant that specializes in chicken sandwiches, and humorously uses cows as their advertising agents. Their 2008 promotional calendar, *One-Hit Wonder Cows*, featured a parody of Bob Marley for the month of December, titled “Medium Rasta” (Figure 10). Standing on a sandy beach, flying the Jamaican flag, wearing dreadlocks and tie-dyed tee shirts, three cartoon Holstein cows use Trinidadian pans and Cuban congas to perform “I Cooked the Chicken (But I Didn’t Cook the Waffle Fries).” Tropicalism abounds with artifacts from Jamaica, Trinidad, and Cuba.
A family of “Vikings” are the comical spokespersons for Capital One credit card on several television commercials. In their 2010 ad titled “Visigoth Beach Vacation” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6alpbCKcZg & Figure 11), these medieval men have earned “…Double miles [for air travel] with every purchase [using their Capital One Venture credit cards], so we earned a tropical vacation in half the time!” As a Trinidadian steel band provides the music, complete with engine room, viewers witness the Vikings in various beach scenes: performing a hula dance complete with grass skirt, coconut bra, and lei; using a battering...

172 The engine room includes drum set and iron (also known as break drum), in this example.
ram on a child’s sandcastle; and running in flowery swim trunks while simultaneously wearing an animal hide and chained leather vest, toting a sword, and tossing his braided and beaded hair extensions aside when jogging on the beach. The luau scene in particular suggests Hawaii, but

Figure 8: Suzuki Music Steel Drums for Reggae Gathering
Figure 9: Images from Friskies TV commercial (2012)
Capital One keeps it generic by using the terms “beach vacation” and “tropical vacation,” thereby broadening commercial appeal to any place considered beach-oriented or tropical.

**Local and Niche Market Advertisements**

Although national advertising campaigns and other widespread media may reach the greatest audience, there are numerous smaller, niche markets that utilize tropicalism to attract as many customers as possible. In June of 2011 I came across this mobile shaved ice booth at the
Oklahoma City Paseo Art Festival (Figure 12). Once again, while most visual cultural indicators point to Hawaii – hibiscus patterned shirt, lei, shaved ice, and kona – upbeat, pan music was broadcast through the booth’s sound system.

Figure 11: Images from Capital One TV commercial (2010)
The final two examples illustrate the common association between Jamaica and the steelpan. While steel drums are common in many Caribbean countries, the connection between Jamaica and pan is strongest, likely due to the enormous popularity of Bob Marley in the United States. Therefore, many Americans’ default association with non-Hispanic Caribbean culture is Jamaica. A Jamaican steel drum ring (Figure 13) signals tropicalism on Etsy.com, an online marketplace for individuals who craft their own merchandise or upcycle used products. Through color scheme and dreadlocks, the Idol Hands Caribbean finger drums, mini electronic steel drum kit (Figure 14) visually references Jamaica, aurally references Trinidad, and lexically indicates the entire Caribbean. Moreover, the name Idol Hands may allude to both the popular television
show American Idol (stage lights and raging audience) and lucrative Guitar Hero video game series (similar jagged font).  

![Jamaican steel drum ring on Etsy.com (2011)](image13)

**Figure 13:** Jamaican steel drum ring on Etsy.com (2011)

![Idol Hands children’s toy](image14)

**Figure 14:** Idol Hands children’s toy
Repertoire, Music Publication, Festivals and Craftsmen

Pan music publishing, festivals featuring pan players and steel bands, instrument craftsmen and craftsmanship, and commercially driven forces relating to steel band repertoire choices are additional, important nodes of pan-related commerce connecting popular and commercial pan culture in the United States. Transcriptions have become a common method of studying and legitimizing pan music via Western notation and analytical techniques (Remy 1991; Williams 2003; Dudley 1996). Doing so frames pan music within a useful and valid interpretation for those who utilize Western music notation and theory methods. Here I focus on the integral role particular repertoire choices play in legitimizing university pan programs in the United States. I explore non-collegiate support structures such as publishing companies and instrument craftsmen, which are inextricably linked to university pan programs. Often, directors and their programs employ a balance of Trinidadian and Western musical selections as they approach issues of appropriate repertoire choices and cultural representation, while simultaneously promoting the versatile capabilities of the pan. Without this inclusive method, many suspect pan would continue to be viewed as a static, “tropical island” novelty instrument, rather than a culturally significant and diverse educational tool, and a legitimate musical instrument. In the following statement, U.S. steel band pedagogue Chris Tanner shares his sentiments on the issue:

For educators, the steel band represents an excellent opportunity for teaching style differences; the steel band experience can serve as an educational lab where students learn how to realize the different challenges of performing diverse styles of music…An analogy: a piano teacher would never allow his students to study and perform only Bach fugues. Rather, he would make sure that the student experienced repertoire from different time periods and diverse musical genres. In the same way, steel band directors must not get caught up in the trap of playing only fast, loud, exciting calypsos. Of course, calypso is a staple of the repertoire, and performing calypso pays due homage to the Trinidadian origins of pan. However, a band that plays expressive ballads and jazzy sambas for example,
along with their fun calypso charts, will likely mature faster than a band that does not. (2007:52).

These repertoire considerations are reflected in pan publishing companies’ catalogs and concert choices for steel bands.

**On the Standardization of Steel Band Repertoire in the United States**

Since the early 1990s, music publishing companies have contributed significantly to the dissemination of pan music in the United States. Prior to their establishment, written music for pan was commonly distributed and shared among individual directors and ensembles. Sheet music publication, although convenient for the overworked director, fosters disassociation between composers and arrangers, and the bands (i.e. music directors and musicians) that play their music. Nevertheless, sheet music is a vital resource that allows for convenient and accurate reproduction of repertoire and supports the growth of the steel band movement in the United States. Indeed, the mere presence of at least nine steelpan publishing companies in the U.S. reflects a concern for preservation, an interest in systematizing repertoire, and the financial feasibility for such an industry. Mass production of sheet music has given an increasing number of groups access to the same compositions and arrangements for approximately 24 years.

By interviewing pan professionals (Andy Narell, Chris Tanner, Gary Gibson, Jeff Narell, Liam Teague, Ray Holman, Tom Miller), and representatives from pan sheet music publishing companies (Coyle Drums, Engine Room Publishing, Hillbridge Music, Jeff Narell, Mannette Steel Drums, Pan Press, Inc., Pan Ramajay Productions, Panyard Inc., Tropical Shores, Two Trees Music), the following information was collected regarding the most popular music styles for steel bands, composers of pan music, and compositions.
the most popular music styles played by U.S. steel bands, are calypso/soca (43%), Latin jazz\(^{175}\) (20%), pop/rock (17%), original compositions (9%), classical (7%), and other (4%). According to professionals contacted, calypso (54%), Latin jazz (25%), pop/rock (9%), classical (8%), and originals (4%) are the most popular music styles. In both cases, calypso/soca, Latin jazz, and pop/rock are the most popular styles of music played by U.S. steel bands. Although an extensive variety of musical styles are offered by publishing companies, the popularity of calypso/soca, Latin jazz, and pop/rock is likely due to directors’ concerns for an appropriate cultural portrayal and a desire to showcase the diverse abilities of the pan. In the words of Jimmy Leyden of Hillbridge Music, “As far as our thinking goes, we feel that the movement should best be served by paraphrasing the oft quoted ‘man cannot live by bread alone!’ …the steel drum movement cannot live by calypsos and socas alone.”\(^{176}\) I posit Latin jazz and pop/rock are popular in the United States due to our own cultural and music familiarities. By extension, arranging jazz, rock, and American pop tunes for steel band in the U.S. is within the conventional practice of arranging popular music styles for steel band; popular music styles in Trinidad just happen to be calypso and soca.

\(^{174}\) I define pan professionals as pannists who travel throughout the United States as guest artists; Andy Narell, email message to author, October 24, 2008; Chris Tanner, email message to author, September 7 & 10, 2008; Gary Gibson, email message to author, September 6 & 14, 2008; Jeff Narell, email message to author, September 18, 2008; Liam Teague, email message to author, September 6, 2008; Ray Holman, email message to author, October 27, 2008; Tom Miller, email message to author, October 16, 2008; Alan Coyle, email message to author, September 19, 2008; David Knapp, email message to author, September 6, 2008; Jimmy Leyden, email message to author, September 30, 2008; J. Marc Svaline, email message to author, September 25, 2008; Jeff Narell, email message to author, September 15, 2008; Chanler Bailey, email message to author, September 29, 2008; Paul G. Ross, email message to author, September 15, 2008; Tom Miller, email message to author, October 16, 2008; Ron Kerns, email message to author, September 10, 2008; Brad Shores, email message to author, September 5, 2008; Gary Gibson, email message to author, September 7, 2008; and Questions may be found in appendix 2.

\(^{175}\) This category is not necessarily limited to \textit{Latin} jazz, but rather a combination of all jazz sub-categories of jazz, of which, Latin jazz is likely the most prominent.

\(^{176}\) Classical, Broadway/movies, folk songs, patriotic, Christmas, Hanukah, reggae, bossa nova, funk, African, bolero, ballad, ska, songo, samba, cha cha, march, beguine, chutney soca, mazuka, Afro-Cuban, waltz, ragtime, tango, religious, and spiritual styles are sold by the ten contact companies. Jimmy Leyden, email message to author, September 30, 2008.
According to publishers, there is no single composer of pan music that is most popular in the United States. Responses varied so widely “other” was the most popular composer (65%), followed by Tom Miller (21%) and A. Narell (14%). However, professionals revealed Ray Holman (39%), Len ‘Boogsie’ Sharpe (39%), Miller (11%), and A. Narell (11%) to be the most popular composers. While responses between publishers and professionals differed significantly, professionals’ feedback more directly reflects what bands are actually performing at their concerts; Trinidadian composers are most popular (Holman and Sharpe). Composers Miller and Narell are American. Again, this illustrates a balance between, and reverence for, a Trinidadian cultural connection over the more familiar American soundscape. Narell expressed his inclination toward Trinidadian composers in 2008 when saying, “Steelbands in the USA should be playing more Ray Holman.”¹⁷⁷ Indeed, such a cultural connection lends credence to pan programs by capitalizing on a basic belief and understanding that associating a music with its origins bolsters its authenticity and legitimacy. However, Holman himself has commented on the importance of more than “re-creation of what you have in Trinidad.”¹⁷⁸ Although Holman’s music is more commercially available than many Trinidadians’, Trinidadian publishing companies have a difficult time getting music to the American market. This is likely due to a lack of trusting relationships between American businesses and Trinidadian composers, (and vice versa), a lack of economic incentive for all parties involved, and a lack of leadership among Trinidadian copyright institutions resulting in neglect of the rights and licenses of composers.

¹⁷⁷ Andy Narell, email message to author, October 27, 2008.

Despite the extensive variety of American composers’ compositions and arrangements offered by publishing companies, the few Trinidadian composers’ works that are available are particularly popular in the United States. According to publishers, the most popular compositions, include “Sarah” (33%), “Pan in A Minor” (17%), “Llava Tierra” (17%), “Heartland” (17%), and “My Band” (16%). According to professionals contacted “Sarah” (34%), “Tobago Jam” (22%), “Pan in A Minor” (11%), “Llava Tierra” (11%), “Heartland” (11%), and “My Band” (11%) are the most popular compositions for U.S. steel bands. With the exception of “Tobago Jam,” once again the results are strikingly similar between publishers and professionals.

“Sarah,” “Tobago Jam,” “Pan in A Minor,” and “My Band” were composed by Trinidadians Len ‘Boogsie’ Sharpe (first two), Aldwyn ‘Lord Kitchener’ Roberts, and Ray Holman, respectively, while “Llava Tierra” and “Heartland” were composed by American, Tom Miller.

Once more we can reflect upon the established versus foreign dichotomy of repertoire selections. Ron Kerns of Panyard, Inc. provides another insight into this situation, “Some of our [published] tunes perhaps became popular due to popular recordings, such as the Our Boys records from the early 1990s.” Indeed, “Sarah,” “My Band,” and “Tobago Jam” are tracks on the Trinidadian Our Boys Steel Orchestra album Pan Progress, released in 1991 – just a year after the establishment Panyard, Inc. The influence of audio recordings on the popularity of pan literature is reminiscent of Harry Belafonte’s Calypso album. As most of these tunes have

179 For a detailed list, see appendix one.

180 Our Boys is a well-known steel band from the island of Tobago.

181 Ron Kerns, email message to author, September 10, 2008.

182 Panyard, Inc. was likely the most popular and influential publisher of pan music in the U.S. throughout the 1990s.
been around for over a decade, we may now be witnessing the emergence of standard repertoire among some steel bands in the United States.

Repertoire can also become “standard” within a group. This is illustrated by a text message I received from American steelpan builder and tuner, Darren Dyke. While tuning the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) steel band in Nacogdoches, Texas he came across a posted list of repertoire that has been displayed since approximately 1998. Dyke’s text read, “Their set list for the past 14 years!!” and included a photo of the posted list: “Limbo,” “Marianne,” “Rant and Rave,” “Suzie,” “Dain Brammage,” “Yumbambe,” “Stand by Me,” “La Samba,” “Black Magic Woman,” – “Pan Christmas,” “Greensleeves,” “Carol [of the Bells],” and “Frosty the Snowman.” These selections could be categorized as calypsos, an original composition, Latin, U.S. popular music, and holiday. “Rant and Rave,” “Suzie,” and “Yumbambe,” stand out as favored publications from Panyard from the 1990s. “Limbo” and “Marianne” are not considered to be legitimate choices by many pannists because they are so overplayed; they promote a narrow perspective of steel band music. Overall, this list seems indicative of stylistic choices by many bands in the United States.

In a later discussion about SFASU with Dyke, he noted that the “vibe” of the band is the same from year to year. “It remains a novelty… They have a ton of music in the book, but a significant amount of it is the pop steel band standard rep[ertoire] like “Rant and Rave,” etc. … no one there gets very serious about pan. I think it is treated somewhat like pep band…And they do play much of the same music year after year…” Directed by former Percussive Arts Society president Genaro Gonzales, other current selections of the SFASU steel band include “Kokomo,”

---

183 Darren Dyke, text message to author, November 19, 2012.
184 Darren Dyke, text message to author, January 14, 2013.
“Birthday Party,” “Jump in the Line,” and “Sunset.” According to Dyke they are, “Another band that seems to have stopped buying new music in 1994.”\textsuperscript{185} Although students cycle through the university, Dyke assumes there are no guest artists or outside influences. Therefore, “I think complacency and lack of curiosity of the director is the culprit. He probably is bored, but is not inspired either.”\textsuperscript{186} According to Dyke, even in 1994 this repertoire

...was still watered down, not hip, [nor] current arranging. The music Invaders played in 1955 was far more interesting from an arranging standpoint...All these tunes are “student” arrangements. By and for students. It’s like middle school band music in a way. But it passes in many places as the standard repertoire, and therefore somehow representative of steel band music in general.\textsuperscript{187}

Again, it appears that several Panyard, Inc. charts represent the majority of what could be considered “standard” steel band repertoire.

Steel band programs that heavily focus on this “standard” repertoire may indicate a “novelty” pan program as they are fixed upon musical selections of early 1990s pan music from a very limited catalog, from one publishing company. Concurrently, the lack of canonical works has prevented pan from being incorporated into the repertoire lists of established music organizations such as the Florida Bandmasters Association (FBA). As of 2008, FBA cited the lack of a canon as a deficiency whereby pan could not be added as its own category within the existent solo and ensemble adjudication framework.\textsuperscript{188} Earlier in this chapter, U.S. steel band pedagogue Tanner highlighted the importance of a varied repertoire. Later he advocated for original compositions to be a part of diverse repertoire of musical choices, “Several reasons exist

\textsuperscript{185} Darren Dyke, text message to author, January 19, 2013.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid.

as to why steel band has yet to be universally recognized as a legitimate, viable art form, and the lack of a sizable body of excellent, canonical repertoire is one of them” (2007:55). Without distinctive, unique music, steel bands cannot achieve a legitimate status within the wider world of music. In my 2008 study of repertoire, original steel band compositions accounted for a mere 9% of repertoire performed in the United States.

The Percussive Arts Society (PAS) is a U.S.-based, international organization working to include pan repertoire as a regular part of their percussion offerings both compositionally and when considering new repertoire and recordings. Annually, the society holds performance-based competitions that cycle through various ensemble types. In 2013 the category was Steel Pan Ensemble, in 2006 Duo for Marimba and Pan, and in 1996 Steel Drum Ensemble. Since 2001, PAS has included Steel Drum Ensemble as a literature review category. By using the term steel drum or steel pan, as opposed to the previous general category of ethnic or world percussion, the field of percussion within the United States has singled out and embraced pan as an individual instrument and ensemble, and as a compositional medium.

With approximately eight hundred total charts published, pan literature availability is growing in the United States. According to Chris Tanner, this may be due to the growth of steel bands in educational institutions.

---

189 Some non-steelpan categories in recent years have included percussion ensemble with CD, drumset soloist with medium percussion ensemble, marimba quartet, marimba/cello duo, and percussion ensemble (8-12 players).

190 For a complete listing of winners, please see appendix 3. While the terms steel pan and steel drum are essentially synonymous, I have left them separate here to illustrate the change in terminology from an term more commonly used in the United States versus a term more commonly used in Trinidad for the same instrument.

191 Steelpan literature was originally included in the Ethnic Percussion Instruction category, later renamed World Percussion Instruction, before being placed in its own category called Steel, and ultimately Steel Drum Ensemble in 2001.

192 See Appendix 1.
In my opinion, there is a decided movement in the art form in the States toward school-based programs. Steel band directors who are also band, orchestra or choir directors in many cases will want published charts; that is how they operate their other "traditional" ensembles… Therefore, we can see a link between the growth of steel band in the US and the rise of steel band sheet music publishers. There would not be a need for publishers if there were no demand for charts!\(^{194}\)

The late 1990s brought a significant swell in the creation of pan publishing companies; approximately one-third of companies discussed in this dissertation were founded by that time.

More publishing companies were established in the 1990s than in the 2000s. Have we already experienced a ‘golden era’ of published pan compositions in the U.S.? Although this would seem to suggest that the need for pan music in the U.S. has waned, that is unlikely as the number of bands is on the rise. Perhaps U.S. publishing companies have become more effective at providing a wide range of high-quality and popular choices for steel bands, reducing the need for new publishing companies.

**On the Legitimacy of Western ‘Classics’ as Pan Repertoire**

As has been established, *classics* (a term used in Trinidad to denote music derived from Western European art music) are not the most common style pieces to be played by U.S. steel bands. However, classics are worthy of discussion here, as they are typically misunderstood contextually, as evidenced by a 2011 article in the Florida State University student newspaper, *The FSView and Florida Flambeau*, “[W]ho would’ve thought a steel band could gracefully pull off Tchaikovsky’s “Swan Lake”?\(^{195}\) At best, this quote implies that it is unusual for steel bands

---

\(^{193}\) Between fall 2008 and December 2012, the total number of pan charts published in the U.S. increased by over 100 selections.

\(^{194}\) Chris Tanner, email message to author, February 24, 2007.

to perform classical music in that it seems inauthentic, but in Trinidad this could not be further from the truth.

The question of the legitimacy of “classics” as pan repertoire begins in Trinidad. Between 1498 and 1962 Spanish, French, and English forces colonized the Caribbean nation of Trinidad. The prominence of orchestral music in Britain coincided with its subjugation of Trinidad (1797-1962), and introduced an intricate symphonic music system to an already convoluted web of aboriginal, Spanish, French, and African music cultures. In addition, British rule of Trinidad accompanied the steel band’s establishment as a popular and nationalistic ensemble.

Eurocentric disdain for the drumming of African slaves and their descendants became a hostile environment for those Trinidadians attempting to preserve their musical heritage and traditions. “[T]o the ear of the European philharmonist there is no music in it (the drum) but a dull monotonous reiteration of sound…The state of civilization of people whose members can be set in motion by the repetition of such barbarous sounds can easily be gauged.” The author of this 1883 Trinidad News article clearly abhors both the music and lack of civility demonstrated by Afro-Trinidadians. Despite severe music restrictions from this time in the form of the governmental banning of skin drumming, the steelpan emerged over decades of instrumental evolutions. During these early days, pan was associated with lower-class jamette culture, and many Trinidadians did not see the value of pan. They believed pan to be, at best, inferior to Western art music. As noted in this quote from 1946 in Stephen Steumpfle’s The Steelband Movement, “There is a terrific amount of rot talked about “culture” these days, and if steel bands

---

196 At worst, this quote implies steel bands are not suited for playing classical music.

197 Simon Lee, Noel Norton’s 20 years of Trinidad Carnival, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, Trinidad & Tobago Insurance Ltd., 1990.
are to fall into this category, I prefer to remain a savage and listen to Mozart.” (Stuempfe 1995:66). The author of this statement, which was originally published in the Trinidadian Guardian newspaper, was similar to the views expressed by many of upper class and middle class critics of pan of the day.

In 1951, the Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra (TASPO) was formed to play at the Festival of Britain. Preparation for the festival required a set of fully chromatic steel pans to be crafted, and Ellie Mannette and others obliged so that a diverse repertoire could be performed “using full and accurate chords.”

“Classics” selections that were performed included Brahms’s “Lullaby” and Toselli’s “Serenata.”

In colonial Trinidad[,] European classical music was highly regarded, and…considered…more “complex” and “difficult” than other types of music…panmen gained familiarity with this tradition through radio broadcasts and movie soundtracks…They also understood the symbolic value that this music carried in their society; they could gain legitimacy as musicians by successfully playing the classics.”

During Mannette’s early days in the steel band, instrument names changed from terms such as ping-pong, balay, grumbler, tune boom, dud-up, and grundig to conventional Western names like soprano, tenor, guitar, cello, tenor bass, and bass.

In 1952, steel bands were permitted by festival organizers to compete in Trinidad’s Biennial Music Festival. In the festival’s early years, bands were required to perform a test piece and two selections from four different musical categories: rhumba, calypso, mambo, and

198 Stuempfe, 95.
199 Stuempfe, 96.
200 A simple but sensible explanation of why Trinidadians adapted classical music to steelpan is because it was an ordinary part of their lives. If you enjoy a music that is a part of your everyday life, then naturally it would be incorporated into your music. Indeed, this is one of my arguments as to why U.S. steel bands play so many rock, pop, and Latin jazz arrangements. Stuempfe, 86.
201 The Biennial Music Festival was later named the Steelband Music Festival and Pan is Beautiful Too.

133
classic.\textsuperscript{202} Mambos and classics were the most popular category choices.\textsuperscript{203} Ensembles and soloists have competed and won with a variety of classics, and bands have adopted an array of symphonic-inspired names.\textsuperscript{204}

Steel bands have had an intimate relationship with classics and have adopted them for many reasons: the music is enjoyable, the genre is difficult and therefore practical for competition by challenging participants, and its association with elite, European traditions represents legitimacy and the upper social stratus of society. Classics provided pannists with new challenges and educational experiences in performance, arranging, orchestration, and instrument construction. However, classics have also been a cultural link to colonialism. Once the dual-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago gained independence from England in 1962, and as it moved through the 1970s Black Power movement, the appropriateness of classics was increasingly questioned. Of the 1973 Steelband Music Festival, local priest Terrence Julien claimed the Festival was, “the colonisation of the calypso and the steel pan…I don’t know which was more pathetic! The ‘conductors’ or the ‘orchestras’ trying to achieve the correct frenzy and mannerisms of Toscanini… Eleven years after our so-called ‘gaining of independence,’ we have

\textsuperscript{202} Gideon Maxime, \textit{41 Years of Pan}, 1994, 71.
\textsuperscript{203} Stuempfle, 105.
\textsuperscript{204} Examples of classical pieces include Schubert’s 5\textsuperscript{th} Symphony, excerpts from his \textit{Unfinished Symphony}, and “Ave Maria”; Dvorak’s “Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95 (a.k.a. ‘New World’), Mozart’s \textit{Eine kleine Nachtmusik}, Marriage of Figaro, “Minuet in E Flat,” and “Twelve German Dances”; Benjamin Britten’s “Sunday Morning” from his opera \textit{Peter Grimes}; von Weber’s “Overture to Oberon”; Beethoven’s “Fur Elise,” “Minuet in G,” Moonlight Sonata, and Coriolan Overture; Rossini’s “Wedding Dance”; Tchaikovsky’s “Waltz of the Flowers” and “Serenade for Strings”; Strauss’s “Voices of Spring”; Bach’s \textit{Toccata and Fugue} and “Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring”; Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus”; Sibelius’ \textit{Finlandia}; and Liszt’s “Liebestraum”. (Maxime 1994). Examples of symphonic-inspired names include West Side Symphony, East Side Symphony, Central Symphony, Hillside Symphony, Potential Symphony, City Symphony, Orange Grove Symphony, Southern Symphony, Diamond Symphony, Starlift Symphony, Symphony Stars, West Philharmonics, Sforzata, Gay Crescendoes, Scherzando, Trinidad Scherzando, and Metronomes.
a test piece...of English music!”\textsuperscript{205} Here, Julien’s nationalistic sentiments became an argument for the illegitimate nature of classics.

Another way in which steel orchestras have utilized classics is with the \textit{bomb} tune. Bomb tunes, a staple genre in pan music, are renditions of classics (or other musical styles) played up-tempo in calypso and soca styles. Bomb tunes are used competitively during carnival season and played “on the road” rather than in a concert hall. This tradition started sometime in the 1940s and gained significant popularity in the 1950s after the All Stars Steel Orchestra played their arrangement of Beethoven’s “Minuet in G” as a calypso. Their performance took place \textit{j’ouvert} morning (Monday morning) of the 1955 carnival season, as a competitive response to another band’s bomb tune from the preceding carnival. Some other bomb selections from this time include Schubert’s “Ave Maria,” Liszt’s “Liebersträume,” Beethoven’s \textit{Moonlight Sonata}, Handel’s “Ev’ry Valley Shall Be Exalted” and excerpts from his \textit{Water Music}, Strauss’s “Roses from the South,” Mozart’s \textit{Eine kleine Nachtmusik}, and selections from Bizet’s \textit{Carmen}.\textsuperscript{206}

In “Dropping the Bomb: Steelband Performance and Meaning in 1960s Trinidad,” Shannon Dudley examines the bomb from three distinct perspectives: “the Bomb as an accommodation of colonial hegemony (“Sophistication”), ... the Bomb as resistance (“Resignification”), and ... [the Bomb as] “Aesthetic Pleasure.”\textsuperscript{207} This overview represents the range of perspectives previously investigated with respect to using classics at the Music Festival. Therefore the bomb also raises questions about nationalism and the use of foreign repertoire, and

\textsuperscript{205} Stuempfle, 166.

\textsuperscript{206} Stuempfle, 113. Maxime.

whether or not nonnative music should be incorporated into repertoire performed on Trinidad’s national instrument.

Figure 1. Beethoven “Minuet in G” from Piano Sonata Opus 49, no. 2.

a. All Stars Rendition.

b. Beethoven Original.

Figure 15: Beethoven "Minuet in G" from Piano sonata Opus 49, no. 2.

---

Journalist, musician, and cultural activist Pete Simon expressed his dismay regarding the bomb in this way, “The titles of the bombs tell the story of Snob appeal and the names of the composers are cast in the same mold. One is not surprised to hear of 'The Seventh Movement of the Sixth Concerto' by Janislav Bumbumkoski, or 'The Last Overture of the Twelfth Opus' by Igor Ronskoopoofpoofpoof!”209 But in the competitive atmosphere of carnival, the bomb allowed steel bands to set themselves apart, musically. Pannists were playing “music,” not just rhythms. Yet, European musical styles, traditions, and aesthetics were not accepted unconditionally; rather they were absorbed, altered, and adapted to suit their new masters – the pannists. As opposed to the Festival, which is very formal in nature, bomb tunes invited audience participation by way of dancing, yelling, and additional impromptu percussion because of its association with carnival.

Dudley offers another perspective for understanding the bomb framework, “…if we think of the Bomb as Classics performed in calypso style, then Panorama has in a sense become its mirror image, featuring calypsos performed in a classical style: ten minute theme and variation arrangements, elaborate modulations and re-harmonizations, introductions and codas, strictly memorized and performed by an orchestra of one hundred players.”210 For nationalistic and musical reasons, the bomb eventually waned in popularity and the Panorama has become the favored carnival-time competition.

Classics and bomb repertoire for steel orchestras persist in Trinidad and have accompanied the instrument on its global journey. An early television and popular culture example of this occurred on the David Frost talk show; David Frost showcased Liberace with Hugh Borde’s Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band in 1970 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Pkl98XyX0). During the opening of the episode, Liberace explains how he “discovered” the

209 Ibid., 146.
210 Ibid., 160.
band at the Montreal Expo in 1967. His hegemonic claim of discovery seems to imply that Trinidad Tripoli did not exist or was unknown prior to Liberace, in the same way that Christopher Columbus “discovered” America. Liberace provides the audience with a brief history of the pan, and continues to describe the individual sections of the steel band: basses, cellos, doubles “sort of become the woodwinds,” and the shortest ones “are the strings.” Ultimately Borde, the musical director, comes out on stage dressed similarly to Liberace and as the band plays “Sabre Dance,” words appear toward the bottom of the screen, including “Steeldrum’s ‘finest moments’.” Whether the ‘finest moment’ was working with Liberace or performing a piece of Western art music, both point to an elite experience occurring outside of Trinidad.

Steel bands and publishing companies in the United States have also used classics to move pan beyond novelty status by performing “legit” repertoire. Of the eleven principal pan music publishing companies in the United States today, eight sell symphonic orchestral music arrangements. Jan Bach’s *Steelpan Concerto* was composed in 1994, and has been performed with the Chicago Sinfonietta, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, at the Kennedy Center in New York City, and with orchestras in Peoria, Dartmouth, Boston, and Champaign.211 The PANorama Caribbean Music Fest, a competition for steel bands in the U.S., has been held annually in Virginia Beach since 2002. At least half of the grand champions of this competition have given a nod to pan’s classical background by including a classic in their competition set.212 In 2004, the historic Steelband Music Festival became the World Steelband Festival when it was held in New York City’s Madison Square Garden. Twelve steel bands were featured in the “orchestra” category, many of which performed classics, and utilized conductors and orchestral

---

211 Jan Bach, email message to author, April 11, 2010.

212 Dave Longfellow, interview by author, April 12, 2010.
percussion instruments. In 2008, American pannist and composer Andy Narell had his original steel band compositions arranged for performance with the Metropole Orchestra of Holland.

In Trinidad, orchestral music has played an historical and symbolic role in the formation of steel band repertoire, instrument tuning, and in providing names for both steel orchestras and specific instrument voices within the steel band. Classics simultaneously represent legitimacy, colonialism, adaptation, a particular music aesthetic preferences, and are an integral part of steel band repertoire. It is interesting that in the United States there is such “ownership” of European art music that audiences question the legitimacy of classics on pan, when European colonial rule and intimate cultural association has occurred far more contemporarily in Trinidadian history than in that of the United States. Trinidadian and U.S. pannists alike have discovered classics through steel band repertoire.

**Competition-Based Festivals in the United States**

Since the 1980s, educational and competition based steel band festivals have been hosted in Oregon, Virginia, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida, Colorado, and Delaware. Established in 2003, the PANorama Caribbean Music Fest is part of a larger series of arts events sponsored by the Virginia Beach Chamber of Commerce that features a competition-based steel band festival. The weekend festival includes workshops and master classes on topics such as engine room and arranging that are conducted by clinicians including Trinidadians Liam Teague and Jit Samaroo, and Americans Andy Narell and Tom Miller. On Saturdays up to 25 bands compete for an audience of several hundred. Bands are scored on a 100-point rubric that consists of musicality, technical execution, tuning, stage presence, and repertoire selection. These aspects of
competition and adjudication by experts are similar to the Trinidadian Panorama from whence it takes its name.

At the 2011 PANorama festival, 85 pieces of music were performed. Forty-eight were composed or arranged by Americans, and 26 were composed or arranged by Trinidadians. Genre categorization revealed that pop music and calypso/soca music were most commonly performed, with 26 and 25 pieces, respectively. Other categories performed were jazz, classical, and reggae. Most bands repertoires’ were arranged by someone associated with the band, although some music was purchased from publishing companies, most notably Panyard Inc. and Pan Ramajay Productions.²¹³

Interviews with band directors revealed they shared consensus with appropriate repertoire choices and cultural representation. Every director noted the importance of performing soca and calypso. Jeremy, an American of Trinidadian descent who directs a steel band in Maryland, said by performing the soca “Pump Me Up,” he was “just making sure that we express the origins of the instrument, making sure we pay respects to Trinidad and the type of music they like to play.” Similarly, Mike, a steel band director in Florida said, “I think soca and calypso are essential. Those are the musics from Trinidad that we often emulate, that the pan often plays. So I feel like it’s important to hit those.”²¹⁴ However, another oft voiced sentiment was the importance of steel bands playing varied repertoire. Sophia, a community steel band director in Virginia, expressed the importance of diverse musical selections based on her lived experiences as a Trinidadian and a Trinidadian in the United States:

When people from outside the Caribbean see the steel drum, the first thing they think about is “it’s an oil drum.” So as a steel drum player, you have to play those


²¹⁴Ibid.
things. They expect you to do it, [play island favorites, calypsos, and socas]. On the flip side though, I think it’s important to keep in mind that from the beginning, the pannists have always played music that is not indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. I mean, “Maria” is what got the British in Trinidad to pay attention to the steel pan in the first place. So I think it’s important to show people that this is a very versatile instrument…You can play classical music on it, you can play hip hop, you can play jazz, there’s just so many things that you can do on it. And I think it’s important to never, ever narrow down the types of music we play on it. We should have an open mind, let’s experiment, you know, what can we do with it? Let’s explore different things.

In her statement, Sophia reveals several attitudes towards repertoire that are worth unpacking, that go beyond the obvious arguments for versatility. First, she touches upon the “expected” musical choices for pannists: “island” music of varying degrees. In associating this presumed music style with oil drums, Sophia implies U.S. audiences anticipate primitive or unsophisticated music from pan. She also points out how the song “Maria” from the musical West Side Story garnered respect for pan from British colonialists, suggesting British (or outside) approval gathered further acceptance for steelpan. Lastly, Sophia mentions the importance of experimentation. This may be a consequence of the relative newness of the instrument. Its contribution to music is still in a trial stage.

Each of these notions illustrates the importance of different repertoire for the legitimacy of the steelpan art form. Director Jeremy expressed sentiments similar to Sophia:

We’re just trying to prove that the pan, since it’s been in existence, has stretched far from that little [island favorites, calypsos, socas] domain…They play different types of music, [and] they can play it well. I never want to go into a competition like Virginia Beach and play straight soca, calypso or reggae, I always want to mix it up.

Both Sophia and Jeremy explained that audiences have particular expectations regarding what they perceive as steel band music. Jeremy mentions the anticipation of reggae, which is native to Jamaica, and later in her interview, Sophia refers to, “Yellow Bird music.” American-born Jamaican, Harry Belafonte, popularized the song “Yellow Bird.” Although wildly popular,
“Yellow Bird” has always been a stylized calypso for U.S. audiences, and has become an overplayed “standard” for steel bands in the United States. The passionate post of a contributing member to the online Steel Drum Message Board further supports this claim. The author of one thread titled “The Yellow Bird Is Dead” makes an argument against songs such as “Yellow Bird,” “Matilda,” and “Mary Ann,” because they are over-played, stating, “I have beaten the feathers off the yellow bird till it was plucked.” An association between pan and this kind of music potentially limits pan’s development. However, Rudy King, early Trinidadian pan pioneer in the United States argues against the idea of an over-played repertoire: “I know some people from Trinidad who wouldn’t do Harry Belafonte songs. If I went along with that I wouldn’t have got work. It was a business. True, some images fit some stereotypes [such as previously mentioned flowered shirt, straw hat, bright, and colorful clothes]. But when you’re looking for work, for money, damn the stereotypes! We did what we must.”

Two steel band directors involved with the PANorama Festival also spoke of classical music as helping shape listeners’ understanding and boost students’ competence. Jeremy considers classical music to be a great way to develop young pannists’ technical skill and transform audience perceptions. Rachel, a high school steel band director from Palm Coast, Florida believed that classical music offered an experience for steel band students to feel accomplished at performing a difficult musical task, granted one that was situated within ‘legit’ Western framework.


217 Ibid. Knapp.
The PANorama Caribbean Music Festival is set on the 24th Street stage between Atlantic Avenue and the Atlantic Ocean in Virginia Beach. The use of a stage seems too mundane to examine in regards to steel bands in festivals and concerts. However, the use of a stage is a formalized element that has helped legitimize pan. As noted by Steumpfle in regards to Trinidadian history, “During [its early] period the steelband was associated with the streets and was considered to be simply a form of accompaniment for dancing and revelry at Carnival or at other festive occasions. But in formal concert settings steelband music was presented as something to appreciate for its artistic value and cultural significance” (83). A stage literally elevates a performance group for audience members to appreciate. Indeed, during my two years performing with the University of Oklahoma steel band, I was always intrigued by the fact that the steel band only performed prelude music in the lobby prior to the percussion ensemble concert. When I asked the graduate student director why the band did not play on stage with the percussion ensemble, he claimed, according to the percussion professor, it was too much equipment to move, which is seemingly unusual assertion for instrumentalists who regularly work with complex stage set-ups and an ample stage. Regardless, this lobby setting may have led concertgoers to perceive pan at the university as an afterthought, rather than music worth genuine consideration.

Crafting Steelpans in the United States

Pan craftsmen and women, more commonly referred to as builders or tuners, provide a different perspective on pan legitimacy in the United States. Both American tuners with whom I spoke made a strong correlation between the legitimacy of pan in the U.S. and its use in
educational institutions. Students who first learned to play pan approximately 20 years ago are now teaching and “… making pan a priority in their programs. The broad range of experience[s,] and the variety of outlooks and practices among the new generation of pan teachers has created a dynamic environment for the evolution of the instrument.”

American pan tuner Glenn Rowsey, who feels “the biggest step in legitimizing pan at the university level has been the rapid spread of pan in public education,” echoes this sentiment. In citing school districts around Charleston, South Carolina in which every student plays pan for at least a quarter of the school year as a part of their general music class, Rowsey states it “… almost becomes a responsibility of a university to prepare music education majors to be able to teach pan.” Therefore, according to Rowsey, an increasing number of colleges and universities in South Carolina are adding pan to their curricula in order to better prepare their graduates for such teaching positions.

As craftsmen continue to make instruments for educational institutions, besides sheer numbers, the quality of these instruments has also improved. As noted by Darren Dyke, “As a tuner it is quite clear that in the last decade the quality of instruments has improved, in general, as a result of the demands of the new university directors who, for the most part, seem to have high standards for the tone and intonation of the instrument.” Since the education of new tuners increased in the late 1990s, many of whom studied their craft within a university context, an academic background has “influenced the idea of what constitutes a good pan.”

---

218 The terms builder and tuner are also used interchangeably.

219 Darren Dyke, email message to author, January 11, 2013.

220 Glenn Rowsey, email message to author, January 7, 2013.

221 Ibid.

222 Darren Dyke, email message to author, January 11, 2013.

223 Ibid.
words, in many instances having a university pedigree improves reputability. Since the 1990s, building and tuning has become less concealed, and more accessible as a craft. Nevertheless, builders have concerns about the future progress and legitimacy of pan in the U.S. According to Rowsey, “Honestly, I think the growing public education scene will increase the legitimization at the university level, but without more pan makers and tuners this movement could stall in its tracks.” The supply and demand ratio for quality pans in the U.S. has contributed to high instrument costs, as well as lengthy wait times for new instruments and tuning maintenance.

In addition to the training of more builders and tuners, other solutions to the supply and demand problem could include the standardization of both note placement on pans, and instrument types included in bands. While some layouts and instruments types are more common than others, the steel band is far from standardized. Pensacola, Florida-based craftsman Alan Coyle advocates that the steel band should only consist of four different voices. He likens this decision to the fact that in many Western instrument families, such as saxophones or strings, four voices is common. It is logistically sensible to make this decision, as Coyle’s clients are steeped in the Western music system. Simultaneously, he is endorsing the adaptation of pan to this system as a means of validating pan through imitation of our most “legitimate music” system, in the United States. Rowsey suggests another possibility for increasing the global pan supply, “Automation or overseas production has to happen eventually if [the steel drum art form in the United States] is going to get to the level of the guitar or piano.” While some experimentation has occurred with the mechanization of primary pan building stages, no such processes have ultimately proven successful.

---

224 Glenn Rowsey, email message to author, January 7, 2013.
225 Ibid.
Conclusion

Tropicalism takes a variety of forms in the United States and has had much influence on popular culture, and ultimately on university steel band programs as well. The most common associations seem to be between steelpan and Jamaica, and steelpan and Hawaii, which may be due to the overall popularity and familiarity of those two “tropical paradise” locales for most U.S. citizens. Carelessly fusing together diverse cultural artifacts is likely a product of inexperience, unfamiliarity, and laziness rather than malice—though it is perhaps even more a product of profit motives pure and simple. From a more positive perspective, we could say these customs of cultural combinations occur as a means of being inclusive rather than exclusive. For example, a “tropical vacation” may be more accessible to a customer on the east coast than a Hawaiian vacation; Jamaican reggae is more familiar than Trinidad calypso or soca, but steelpan has an undeniable “exotic,” tropical quality for U.S. consumers. Conversely, being an informed consumer and listener requires a great deal of effort and even potential discomfort associated with complex, sometimes scarring, historical circumstances such as societal shunning for playing pan or gang warfare related to steel band rivalry. As such tropicalism examples continue to arise and proliferate in the U.S., many citizens are likely to continue their association between pan and tropical island vacations, and perhaps nothing more, without the continued efforts of educational institutions and educated individuals working to deconstruct stereotypes and examples of tropicalism.

Wearing a Hawaiian or Polynesian style shirt is one of the greatest visual signifiers used by U.S. pannists to connote tropical island vacations and relaxation. Trinidadian pannist Mia Gormandy explains her thoughts on the negative impact borne from wearing tropical shirts as such:
There are a lot of people in the U.S. that have this idea that pan comes from Hawaii, I guess, and they expect all pan groups to wear Hawaiian shirts, and the lei around the neck with the flowers. [People assume pan] can only play loud. So from the Hawaiian shirts, connecting to everything in the Caribbean is similar, to pan can only play one type of style, to these instruments are not real instruments: they are novelties. [Pan] can play many different types of music. People train in [pan]…to be able to play it very well, and we have pioneers who actually went through the history of the instrument, which, as you know, went through a very violent past. So it’s more like paying respect to the instrument, and wearing the Hawaiian shirts can take it in the wrong direction. It’s not to say people in Trinidad never wear Hawaiian shirts. That’s not the case. It’s just in the U.S. [wearing Hawaiian shirts] gives off this idea of [novelty].

Whether or not the individual realizes it, most artists may be said to seek legitimacy for their work on some level. They want their work to be taken seriously, not frivolously. Likewise, pannists continue to work towards legitimacy for their personal work as well as the broader steel band movement. These attempts are typically impeded by images displayed and music referenced in this chapter. Pan music utilized by Jimmy Buffet helps transport listeners to the beach in their minds, not expose audiences to the incredible musicianship of his pannist Robbie Greenidge nor the diverse capabilities of his instrument. Adult students in the university-supported New Horizons Steel Drum Band embody black Jamaican culture by way of Rastafarian hats, rather than a Trinidadian signifier.

As a recently created instrument, it is unlikely that the growth of steel drums in the United States has plateaued. Hopefully universities can continue to promote a more complex and diverse understanding of pan history and culture to accompany its future growth, but in order for that to happen pannists and educators must upend and deconstruct a variety of pervasive tropicalist scenarios found in television commercials, educational environs, and music performance. As noted by Edward Said “what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia’s use to modern Europe” (Said 1979:115). To reiterate from Chapter 1, the music and cultural history of

---

the steel drum does not matter to people in the United States as much as how pan can be used—not just musically, but also ideologically and culturally. As pannists advance the U.S. pan movement and endeavor toward legitimacy they must acknowledge and negotiate the boundary between the novelty and quality education.

Repertoire choices made by collegiate institutions are reflected in, and influenced by, pan publishing companies’ catalogs. On one hand, publishing companies can dictate what music is available for a university if that band does not have an in-house arranger, but also publishing companies themselves are responding to, and influenced by, institutional growth and needs. The late 1990s brought the first surge in the creation of pan publishing companies. Consequently, some academic steel band programs focus heavily on this “standard” repertoire from the 1990s, which implies a static program to pannists such as Dyke. At the same time, without a firm set of canonical works, pan has not been integrated into music organizations such as the Florida Bandmasters Association. Pedagogues including Chris Tanner have advocated for original compositions for steel band as an important part of diverse musical choices and unique music, without which steel bands cannot achieve a legitimate status within the wider world of music.

Steel band directors in the United States have utilized a balance of Trinidadian and Western musical selections in their programs in order to construct appropriate repertoire choices and cultural representations, while simultaneously promoting the versatile capabilities of the pan. The performance of “classics” has played a historical and symbolic role in the formation of steel band repertoire in Trinidad, as well as in instrument tuning and providing names for both steel orchestras and specific instrument voices within the steel band. As classics simultaneously represent legitimacy, colonialism, adaptation, and particular music aesthetic preferences, they are
interpreted as a point of contention by some, as novel steel band repertoire by others, and as legitimate repertoire by others still.

The incorporation of pan into educational and competitive festivals in several U.S. states has lent further credence to the art form in several ways. In terms of sheer quantity, festivals imply a certain level of interest across the United States. Rather than using an informal venue, festivals utilize a stage and compare steel bands through standardized criteria for judging and scoring. They also include educational perspectives on performance and practice techniques, which help set in motion the codification of these techniques. Pan builders and tuners also have an interest in systematizing pan so far as instrument layout, voices, and quality in the interest of improving the supply and demand dilemma for pan directors in the United States. Without addressing these issues, instruments are too expensive, and take too long to receive and service, which retards the growth of pan ensembles in academic institutions. As noted by craftsmen Dyke and Rowsey, schools are a primary locality for the legitimization of pan in the United States. Academic institutions have helped promote a higher quality instrument in terms of timbre and pitch consistency, and most tuners have learned their craft within a university context. Even the most respected and “authentic” Trinidadian tuners in the United States, Ellie Mannette and Cliff Alexis, are affiliated and supported by universities, which strengthens this tie both for them and their students.
CHAPTER 5

IN DIALOGUE WITH ELLIE MANNETTE

He was strong in his heart and his mind
And he hoped in New York he would find
Embrace for the art that he was a part
Pan for the U.S. of A.
Down the road he built band after band
And pan start to spread ‘cross the land
A real pioneer his mission was clear
Pan for the spirit of man and woman

Ellie Mannette, oh
You are my hero
You give your life for
Something we all can share in
You never wavered
Now we can savor
All that you’ve done for the pan

Introduction

Since the early days of the pan movement, pannists have worked tirelessly to prove that pan is a legitimate instrument with cultural, historical, musical, and social benefits to offer humanity, and therefore, musicians who play it are similarly worthwhile. Trinidadian jazz pannist Othello Molineaux, perhaps best known for playing with bass virtuoso Jaco Pastorius, states, “What I really want to say about where the instrument is now is this. It’s single individuals who have brought it to where it is and not people playing, “Yellow Bird” and a couple of classical pieces to a captivated audience. Single individuals played and showed the intellectual side of the instrument, and that is a lot.”228 There are few who would argue with the


assertion that, as much as any other single individual, Ellie Mannette has been instrumental in bringing the steelpan “to where it is.” In this chapter, we return to Mannette as the central character of this dissertation’s story, now principally through reference to his own account of who he is, what he has done, and why it has mattered. To better highlight his personality and character, I have often presented Mannette in his own words and included his reiterations to give the reader a more lifelike experience of being in dialog with him.

**Early Involvement with Pan**

When I traveled to Trinidad in 2004, I stayed with Ellie Mannette’s sister, Mrs. Doris Augustus. She was an old-fashioned woman who, even in 2004, still associated pan with vagabonds and *badjohns*, and this association was doubly strong for women involved with pan.\(^{229}\) Over 50 years of pan progress brought virtually no emotional change for Mrs. Augustus, when it came to her feelings regarding pan. Nevertheless, the reputation surrounding pan in Trinidad has gone from nefarious to national instrument, and Mannette had real responsibility for this status shift.

The progress of the steel drum was rapid in its early stages from 1946-1950 because the competition was high. Everyone wanted to outdo each other. Toward the end of this period (1949), the government took note and put together TASPO to promote the new instrument of the Caribbean. TASPO was comprised of eleven people from different neighborhood bands in Trinidad, and according to Mannette, it was rather an all-star cast: Mannette from Invaders, Winston “Spree” Simon from the John John band, Dudley Smith from Rising Sun in Belmont, “Patsy” Haynes from Casablanca, Philmore Gordon “Boots” Davidson, Anthony Stevenson from

---

\(^{229}\) Badjohn is a Trinidadian colloquialism meaning a bully or gangster.
Hill 60, Anthony “Tony” Williams from PanAm North Stars, Carlton “Sonny” Roach from Sun Valley, and Belgrave Bonaparte. TASPO was the first to develop chromatic pans to improvise, and to arrange classical music for pan. Until then, repertoire primarily consisted of folk songs. TASPO “…played all over England, Waterloo Bridge, Buckingham Palace, Piccadilly Circus, Edinburgh,” “London, Wales, France, and Paris,” but in France, disagreements occurred among band members. Some wanted to stay in Europe and some wanted to go home. There was poor behavior in Paris, and while a few stayed there, most went home. Regardless of interpersonal strife among TASPO members, the band’s overall success abroad resulted in an improved status for steelpan in Trinidad. Sending TASPO to Britain gave the steelband a new social prominence, across society. According to Stuempfle, “Since British artistic taste was widely respected and often taken more seriously than local judgments, the critical acclaim that the band received in the course of its tour brought greater legitimacy to steelband music at home.” When Mannette returned home he began developing pans based on chromatics.

Another significant connection between pan’s progress, the international community, Mannette, and legitimacy is found in the development of the U.S. Navy Steel Band. With the original reputation of panmen being quite negative, panmen were forced to “steal rotten barrels from where we could [in order to make new pans]. What saved us was the U.S. Navy base at Chaguramas. We stole barrels from them.” As previously mentioned, once Mannette was caught stealing oil barrels, he was asked to pay back the Navy by building steelpans for the Navy to have its own steel band. Mannette worked with the Navy’s band for over 39 years and by way


231 Stuempfle, 99.

of extensive global touring, Mannette claims the Navy Steel Band helped the pan gain “notoriety around the world.”

Regarding his personal influences on the development of the steelpan, Mannette cites the rhythms of the time, stick fighting music, and classical music. Particularly, the “richness of sound of the orchestra” inspired Mannette to strive for a mellow, sustained, and harmonically tuned tonal quality in his pans. He feels the orchestral sound has been embedded in his mind to the point where he cannot tune pans any other way. In fact, Mannette’s prized guitars, his personal set, are wanted by the Narell brothers, but Mannette has told them he will only part with them when the Narells compose a sonata for pan, for him. In line with this tonal preference, he does not like the “bright” sound that is sought after for panorama-style music, and disapproves of the “shattering wildness” of many steel bands’ sounds. Mannette takes credit for several pan innovations, often with the precursor of “No one can dispute the fact…” He had the first steelpan case (a sugar bag), was the first to wrap rubber around wooden sticks to make mallets, and built a drum he named the barracuda which was esteemed enough to have been stolen by a rival band in the neighboring town of John John. He also implemented the ball peen hammer as the primary building and tuning tool for pans. In 1941, Mannette reversed the building process of pans to

---


234 Stick fighting in Trinidad is known as Kalinda. The duel is accompanied by a group of musicians that typically includes skin drumming and a singer known as a chantuelle. The chantuelle is generally considered to be the predecessor of the calypso singer, also known as a calypsonian.

235 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

236 In our interview he imitated the sound of panorama by vocalizing a ‘crash and boom’ sound. Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

sink the bowl in a concave fashion, rather than convex, and in 1946 he built a pan out of a 55-gallon oil barrel, which is still the standard today.

Multiple times throughout our interviews, Mannette would arbitrarily list specific instrument voices he claims to have “passed under his hands” during their creation including the Invader-style tenor pan, single/double seconds (1962), single/double guitar (1964), cello (1966), tenor bass (1968-1969), bass, and quaduet. Mannette lays no claim to the spider web lead (Tony Williams), double tenor (Bertie Marshall), or quadrophonic (Rudolph Charles), and makes no mention of the four pan, or four cello voices. “People try to say I didn’t do certain things, and I say then tell me who did and show me the proof. Otherwise, shut up,” illustrating pride for his achievements and perhaps even concern for his legacy.

During the mid- to late-1940s, a time of rapid steel pan development, band members in Trinidad were still often engaged in gang violence and were regarded as social outcasts by the upper and middle class elite. The success of TASPO overseas helped improve their image, as did Mannette’s band’s involvement with the Little Carib Theater in Trinidad, but Mannette himself experienced negative backlash from his government after refusing an academic scholarship to England offered by the governor of Trinidad. After Trinidad became independent of Britain in 1962, the government moved to further develop the image of pan. The government and private

---

238 In other words, he claims he has made some type of significant contribution to their overall development as an instrument.

239 Pans have the following approximate ranges, depending on the craftsman: lead/tenor pans C3 – F6, double tenor and double second E2 – A5, quadrophonic A2-A5, guitar/cello B2 – B4, C1 – F2.

240 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

241 Gary Gibson, “Ellie Mannette on the Beginnings of Pan in Trinidad,” Percussive Notes 24, no. 4, (1986): 37. According to Gibson, all those years Mannette was in Trinidad, and regardless of all his creations, they never respected him. He was a “steel band man and just a gutter boy.” So he decided to promote his art form abroad. He was regarded as a vagabond until he left in 1962.
corporations sponsored bands.242 Over time, panmen came to be viewed as cultural ambassadors, and today pan is recognized as their national instrument. War on the streets morphed into musical war on stage. Financial rewards, fame, overseas trips, and musical engagements at home enticed bands to follow new rules and regulations.243

Reflections on Dialogues with Ellie Mannette

As Ellie Mannette would say, “No one can dispute the fact…” that he is an important individual in the history of the instrument and the steelpan movement in the United States. Indeed, he himself seems fairly consumed by telling his story and communicating his legacy. Interviews and talks with him can be relatively one-sided and thematic: his sacrifices for his work, his love for young people, the importance of moving the pan art form forward, his world renown reputation, and his humility. In his words, “With pride and humility I gave the world a musical instrument…My work will die if students don’t move it forward… Ellie Mannette [is] synonymous with the steel band world…It happened from constantly working as well as I can…I’ve met with Congress and the Queen, but I’m still a fool sometimes. People can’t believe how down to earth I am…I had a beautiful home and family in NYC, but I’m sorry to say I left it.”244 He speaks of himself in the third person, and is full of oft-repeated, quotable sound bytes; he is extremely warm, friendly, and paternal. His students are his children. He is a visionary and a craftsman, not a businessman in the traditional sense of the word.

242 Ibid., 95.


244 Ellie Mannette, interviewed by author, July 16, 2008.
These last three descriptors have led to some serious ups and downs for Mannette Steel Drums over the years.²⁴⁵ Around the year 2000, the company was taken over by West Virginia University for financial reasons. Several employees have quit over the years, and clinicians have refused to return to the Mannette’s workshop because of the company’s inability to pay money owed to them. When I was waiting to interview Mannette at the company office, one employee who I had never met curtly informed me that I would be lucky to see Ellie within an hour of our scheduled interview time. He asked how long I would be in town. He then threw his office key at me and pronounced that he would be trying to stay away from the shop as much as possible for the next week.²⁴⁶ Frustrations have run high due to faulty organization and a poor business model.

Still, Mannette is energetic and enthusiastic, and there is no shortage of people who respect him. As he approaches 90, he still works on a regular basis and is revered as a builder, tuner, educator, and living pan legend. Some of his “children” may have left the nest, but they frequently return “home” to pay homage and continue their education with him. Mannette is an incessant talker; he practically interviews himself, telling you what he feels you should know, and when he decides he has finished, the interview is over. I receive a gentle push, “It’s been a pleasure talking to you, Janine” or “OK, Janine! If you have any more questions, just call me, day or night. I don’t sleep!” Before he releases me, he verbally notes what topics we will discuss in our next interview, and as an afterthought says, “Then you come up with some ideas, too.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Originally called the University Tuning Project, and presently called Mannette Musical Instruments for legal reasons. The name of the company has changed a few times due to bankruptcy and who, or which entity actually owned the company.

²⁴⁶ Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

Audibly underscoring it all, extraordinarily resonant pans play arpeggiated chords, a sound I have come to associate with Mannette over the years.

No one would deny Mannette’s profound contributions to the history of pan, but to uncritically accept his claims to being, for example, the “…most experienced steel pan person in the world, at present,” 248 or “the most knowledgeable person in the art form today…There’s no denying of that fact,” 249 would stretch the bounds of scholarly integrity. Mannette has indeed committed his life to furthering the art form of pan, particularly in terms of craftsmanship. However, he has had very little experience composing or arranging music for the instrument, or even performing it, for decades. He has been to Trinidad only once since he immigrated to the United States several decades ago. Perhaps Ellie Mannette is the most experienced steel pan person in the world, as he claims, but like any individual who might make such claims, his is conditional claim, founded in a particular orientation of what such a statement means, and open to debate.

As a pannist myself, one of the favorite stories I have heard Mannette tell concerned the layout for the guitar pan, the pan voice I mostly commonly play. He claimed the instrument’s note pattern came to him in a dream. This is the type of captivating “origin myth” story that sticks with a young student when first learning an instrument she greatly enjoys. To that student it may seem like destiny that a person would have instrument patterns come to him in a dream. This may be true, or an exaggeration of reality. Again, Mannette claims to have created seven of the ten voices in the steel orchestra: Invader lead, second, guitar, cello, tenor bass, bass, and quaduet. He lays no claim to the spider web lead, double tenor, quadrophonic, and omitted 4-pan,

248 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.
249 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.
and 4-cello and various types of bass.\textsuperscript{250} We must consider where the truth may be in these statements. Although Mannette is including the quaduet, an instrument of his own design that virtually no pannist plays, and he is not including every pan voice, nor each significant variation on each voice, it is likely true that six pan voices have, in some way, passed under his influential hand at some point in their development.

It is undoubtedly true that Ellie Mannette has worked with thousands of students, professors, and community members since immigrating to the United States. His presence has been truly impactful. During one of our interviews he began with, “I’ve touched more lives than any one professor, because no one professor in any college…,” before abruptly changing the conversation to, “Teaching is the best profession of all,” followed by a listing of places he has traveled and educated people, including, “UF, FSU, Tucson, Phoenix University of Arizona, Long Beach, San Diego, San Francisco—a place on the hill, [and] everywhere up the coast doing workshops.”\textsuperscript{251} These sudden changes and listings, ubiquitous in our interviews, repeatedly reminded me that Mannette’s legacy is paramount to him. Also, he extemporaneously and repeatedly listed people at different universities who call him to ask questions or consult on pan-related matters, and claimed that I could “call any percussion program across the U.S. and ask if they know Ellie Mannette. They will say ‘I’ve heard of him. I don’t know him, but I’ve heard of him’.”\textsuperscript{252} This is surely an exaggeration, though a systematic attempt to substantiate his assertion would likely reveal that his name recognition is indeed very high across the American collegiate percussion world.

\textsuperscript{250} While 6-bass is likely the most common type of bass (6 oil barrels to complete the instrument), 9, 12, and rocket bass (which have conical resonating chambers at the end of their barrels) also exist.

\textsuperscript{251} Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
Regarding his work with other tuners, Mannette remarked, “And let me say this…every steel drum tuner out there today that you can think about, they passed under Ellie Mannette’s hand, except Phil Solomon, and I worked with him…I had direct influence on all of them.”

This statement seems hyperbolic, if not conflicting, in that at another point in our interviews he noted Cliff Alexis as the exception to rule of all tuners passing under his hand. The truth lies in the interpretation. Mannette has likely spoken to nearly all active tuners in the United States, but to what extent has he made a meaningful impact on their individual skills or craft? That is open to conjecture. This is why I have provided a relatively limited list of tuners with direct associations to him in Chapter 3. Honors and awards received is another legacy-related trope Mannette regularly references. These include an invitation to meet the Queen of England, an appearance at the White House to receive the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship Award, and induction into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

Lastly, Mannette consistently mentions his “good name” and reputation. In statements such as, “No college could ever say anything bad about Ellie Mannette…No student could ever say Ellie Mannette has ever stepped out of line. Young people feel safe with me…Reputation means more than money. Your name means more than money,” and, “No one could say I’m a bad guy, in terms of professionalism,” Mannette holds the notion of reputation, including his own, in high regard. He has great pride in the work he has done, and the professionalism with which he has done it. Just as the steelpan itself has been the source of a constant quest for

253 Ibid.
254 Ibid.
“legitimacy,” so too has the life and career of Ellie Mannette. Moreover, it is difficult to separate him from the instruments, movement, or art form in conversation or when examining his life.

When speaking, Mannette has other themes he brings up regularly as well, which still can still be related to his legacy, but perhaps less obviously so. These topics include giving up family and education in favor of developing the instrument, touching the lives of young people, young people taking up the helm to move the art form forward, and his constant refrain, “No one can dispute…” leading him to reference a personal accomplishment.

Ellie Mannette repeatedly reminds listeners of the educational, national, and familial sacrifices he made to continue his work in developing the pan. “I gave up formal education for steel drum. I never regret, because what I have done, I have touched the lives of young people in the U.S. and the world.”256 When he turned down the Trinidian government scholarship, Mannette was cast out by his society and by his own family. Although he has siblings, children, and other relations, he states, “I never really had a family life. My family are [sic] the young people I work with. They become my family. I cherish them. I want to be around them. I never had one.”257 The negative backlash he felt at home encouraged Mannette to leave Trinidad for the United States, where he hoped to make a living and find a place where his instrument, craft, and abilities would be appreciated. As his reputation in the U.S. grew, many Trinidadians were upset with Mannette for “selling his birthright.” Just as jazz, blues, and rock music became increasingly legitimized through their acceptance overseas by outside cultures, Trinidadians were urged to look inward regarding how they were utilizing pan and what progress was being made in Trinidad with the art form.

256 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

“I’m humble, I’m very affectionate, I love people. I love young people, because you have energy, and I sap energy from you guys [laughing].”

Indeed, the young people Mannette has worked with through the years are his family. He is extremely affectionate and caring toward his students. In the midst of giving me an earnest and inspirational speech, “Finish your doctorate. Work hard. Don’t give up. Don’t get bogged down with red tape,” an employee walked into the room. Immediately, he and the employee began joking with each other and fake sparring. He cannot know how many lives he has touched, and he realizes this. When preparing to take the job at WVU, and abandon his freelance lifestyle, Mannette reports that Andy Narell asked him “‘What can any one college do for Ellie Mannette? You have no right working at any one college,’ but working at a college means I have an abundance of students to teach over a period of time, to train, instead of jumping all over the country. Then I don’t forget what I’ve taught to which program where, from year to year.”

As mentioned by Jeff Narell, Ellie Mannette gives freely of himself, his talent, his money, and his knowledge to those interested in pan. “They will tell you I have had no reservation of giving my talent free. I look for nothing in return. I didn’t ask for anything back, and I will do it again. I have done what I have to do for that art form.”

258 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

259 Ibid.

260 Ibid.

261 Mannette claims that before West Virginia University invested in pan, Mannette invested about $200,000 of his own money to train tuners, buying drums and paying salaries. Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

262 Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.
Mannette seems particularly focused on teaching young people to move the art form farther than he can. “Ellie Mannette\textsuperscript{263} is just the beginning. Young people come along and do it better…Ellie Mannette is going to pass one day. He will reach his capacity for thinking. Your teaching ability will be better, more adventurous.”\textsuperscript{264} Like a skipping record, he makes repeated declarations to promote this agenda, “Ellie Mannette is going to pass on, the art form is going to grow. Young people like you are going to move it forward… I talk on and on, on the phone to people who have questions for me about whatever. I will help and talk as much as they need.”\textsuperscript{265} As an individual who has given his life to this particular endeavor, it is no wonder its future success is paramount to him.

**Conclusion**

“No one can dispute the fact of what Ellie Mannette has done,” Mannette himself intones over and over again. “Check it out. If I’m wrong, you will tell me. Look in archives in Trinidad. You cannot dispute Ellie Mannette. I lived it, Janine. I’m telling exact. I don’t care what others did. You cannot dispute it.”\textsuperscript{266} This purpose of this chapter is not to serve as an unquestioning mouthpiece for Mannette, but rather to give the reader an appropriate representation of what it is like to listen to him speak, dialog with him, and to make the reader aware of his conversational themes as they take form, organically albeit sporadically. The redundancies within this chapter have been intentional, to help re-create and simulate Mannette’s personality and character, but in written form.

\textsuperscript{263} He commonly speaks of himself in third person.

\textsuperscript{264} Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 14, 2008.

\textsuperscript{265} Ellie Mannette, interview by author, July 16, 2008.

\textsuperscript{266} Ibid.
Perhaps one can “dispute the fact,” of at least some of what Mannette claims, but it is at least safe to suggest that Ellie Mannette has contributed to the steel band art form as significantly as any other in its history, and, especially in the United States. Moreover, during his days in Trinidad he received little support for his creative endeavors and vision, and had to work tremendously hard to make a reputation for himself and his craft once coming to the United States. It is no wonder, then, that he defends his legacy with such fervor. Without question, Ellie Mannette has been one of the most passionate advocates for the steel band movement in the United States, and in collegiate environments most of all.

It is a two-way street. Mannette feels that just as he has aided the growth of the U.S. collegiate steelband movement, colleges have in turn aided in the legitimization of pan in the world of conventional instruments. The question is whether or not pan has achieved legitimacy as Gary Gibson hoped: “The steel drum band deserves to be treated as seriously as the symphony orchestra. And in Trinidad, it is. With the resources of creative musical talent present in the world, I foresee quite an evolution taking place in the art of pan once it is more widely accepted as a legitimate musical instrument.” As noted by Pachter (1985), biography is not just a list of facts, but also the story of personal struggle; it is more than the understanding of an individual, being also the comprehension of a point in history. While the late 20th century was a time of increased acceptance and incorporation of multiculturalism in U.S. academic institutions, this welcome came through the parameters of written notation and control of precise Western tuning. In a postcolonial effort to keep the current hegemonic power structures in place during waves of immigration, the U.S. has accommodated, assimilated, and controlled musicultures and their

---


musicians. Concurrently, Mannette and his negotiations between tropicalism pressures to conform and advancing his own legacy, which is largely inseparable from pan, have been discussed. Ellie Mannette has been a vital resource in legitimizing the pan movement in the United States, as a craftsman, pedagogue, historian, mentor, composer, culture bearer, inspirational and paternal figure, and friend, both within educational systems and without.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Ellie Mannette has been a major agent of both continuity and change in the history of pan, the U.S. pan movement, and the continuous quest for legitimacy that has defined the development of pan since its origins. As a culture bearer and an important innovator in the history of the instrument, his impact has been significant and far-reaching within the United States, particularly in academic institutions. “No one can dispute…” his sacrifices for his work, his love for young people, the importance he has placed on moving the art form forward, or his world renown. He is the type of person that fellow panman Othello Molineaux references in stating, “It’s single individuals who have brought [pan] to where it is…Single individuals played and showed the intellectual side of the instrument, and that is a lot.”

Mannette’s tireless efforts have resulted in an improved family of instruments, better crafting techniques, a dedicated team of crafting apprentices, an extensive network of students, various resources for bands in the U.S., and a multitude of meaningful interpersonal connections. Each of these deeds has bolstered the legitimacy of pan. In turn, the monetary and educational resources—as well as the raw materials and technologies available for pan craftsmanship—available in the U.S. have helped Mannette by providing him with invaluable tools, such as the strobe tuner and quality oil barrels, which have been necessary for the continued growth of the instrument. Moreover, through his involvement with the U.S. educational system, pan has received recognition as a valuable component of musical and multicultural curricula at many U.S. colleges and universities. Mannette has influenced the musical lives of many students and

professors who associate a portion of their identities with the instrument, and educational-based steel bands that continue to proliferate. He has long been and remains concerned with his legacy and the continual improvement of pan.

The United States is the new frontier for pan. The steel drum movement continues to steadily expand, and as a country with over three million square miles in area and an educational system that claims to find importance of diversity. I use the word “claims” because the success of these diversity considerations is contested. Indeed, within the U.S. steel band movement, educational programs employ greater and lesser extents of tropicalism, which means their representations of pan may not ultimately promote diversity within schools so much as capitalize on the mainstream American perceptions of steelpan. With that in mind, one area for future research from this dissertation could be whether or not steel bands in public schools continue to achieve mandated multicultural requirements when the band is treated as just another type of band, or if repertoire, musical style, rote learning, and cultural context unique to steel band are utilized.

World-renowned Trinidadian pannist Ray Holman has voiced one bright spot of the U.S. steel band movement. He sees an advantage in the smaller size of academic-based steel bands in the U.S. compared to the much larger Trinidadian bands. When bands care only about size and speed for winning Panorama Holman suggests, it becomes self-limiting in terms of societal function. It only serves one cultural purpose. “Every year people ask me, ‘Mr. Holman why we can’t dance to the pan again? We can’t understand what they’re playing’…People forgot how to play nice and sweet. I keep saying it over and over and over and over. You cannot play the steelband like that and expect an audience.”

So there are ways in which pan in the U.S. helps

270 Ray Holman, Lecture, Ramajay Steel Workshop, July 9, 2012.
move the art form forward, and keep it accessible to the average listener, although not in the same ways as in Trinidad. Ultimately, it is a delicate balance between moving beyond the purely “tropical paradise” symbols, still respectfully representing the history and diversity of the instrument, but also remaining an agent of popular music.

Consider the following scenarios: In the spring of 2013, I politely tried to dissuade a young steel band educator from donning a Jamaican flag colored hat with fake dreadlocks (seen earlier in figure 5) for reasons of both cultural sensitivity and educational purposes. One of the band members, in her 50s or 60s, was quite perturbed with my intentions and declared, “Hey, it’s not like he’s playing classical violin…” Only three days earlier I had arrived to play an educational outreach performance at Hutto Middle School in southern Georgia. When I stated my business to the office secretary she immediately launched into a hula-like dance while singing “La Cucaracha.”

These are not isolated incidents of cultural confusion, or tropicalism. Indeed, Chapter 4 illustrates several examples of tropicalism in mainstream, popular U.S. culture. The imagery and sound bites cover a gamut of media, from television commercials and promotional calendars, to educational catalogs, jewelry advertisements, and toys. Carelessly fusing diverse cultural artifacts is likely a product of inexperience, unfamiliarity, and laziness rather than malice, but ultimately, these uses and projections infiltrate educational institutions and their audiences’ understanding of what pan is, what it should sound like, and what purposes it should serve. At present, wearing a Hawaiian or Polynesian style shirt is one of the most common visual signifiers used by U.S. pannists to connote tropical island vacations and relaxation. Again, as noted by Edward Said “what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia’s use to modern Europe” (Said 1979:115). In other words, ordinary U.S. citizens commonly use pan music and imagery as a
means of escapism by essentializing the music to simple island tunes being played by laidback musicians. Pan serves the purpose of taking the listener away from his or her own worries, problems, and stresses.

The dispersion of pan resulted from a combination of polygenesis, networks of individuals, commercial interests, and the efforts of diverse community organizations and educational institutions. As it moved from Trinidad to New York City with immigrant communities, the calypso craze helped bridge cultural and musical divides. The U.S. Navy Steel Band was able to access audiences via television and governmental functions, while presenting a more “familiar, American-government approved” version of steel band. Today, pan has a strong foothold in a many educational systems, including at numerous colleges and universities. Each collegiate steel band has taken different approaches to pedagogy with greater and lesser concerns for musicultural continuities and changes in terms of Trinidadian representation, repertoire, music style, instrumentation, and use of sheet music, all of which link back to legitimacy through considerations of “authenticity” and musical and educational merit. For example, steel bands at NIU and Akron maintain close ties with culture bearers. Judah Cohen claims that a “dual premise of cultural salvage and academic prestige” (2009:313) will provide students with a more complete knowledge of the subject matter, but in the case of the pan world, it undoubtedly grants legitimacy to a program when a cultural fountainhead is regularly involved with and approves of it. With the approval of academia through regular concerts, curricula, and formal music training, combined with the endorsement of major culture-bearer pan artists, students are getting the best of both “legitimizing” worlds.

On the other hand, “Having foreigners…play brings a new level of legitimacy to pan,” according to Ray Holman, because it “shows the rest of the world recognizes the importance of
the pan movement” (Kerns and Irvine 1992:32). Yet in many ways, the steel band movement in the United States is fragmented. The country is geographically vast, making it difficult to stay connected even with instantaneous technology, and pan activities have yet to reach a critical mass whereby communication will be inevitable. Educators, musicians, students, and audience members are all too busy and have too many other demands in their lives to devote ample time and energy to networking and interacting with other educators, musicians, students, and audience members, or to thoroughly educate themselves regarding the history of pan, notions of tropicalism, the latest repertoire, or making a pilgrimage to Trinidad.

Repertoire selections of U.S. steel bands, which influence and are influenced by the music publishers, have had both positive and negative impacts on pan’s movement toward legitimacy. Publishing has consequences; it has also led to the pseudo-standardization of music. The favorable result is that this allows for a point of comparison for steel bands to be evaluated. The adverse effect is that “ready-made” publications have allowed for a culturally distant connection to the music in an already culturally distant country, and a stagnation of an already limited music supply. As previously quoted by Chris Tanner, “Several reasons exist as to why steel band has yet to be universally recognized as a legitimate, viable art form, and the lack of a sizable body of excellent, canonical repertoire is one of them” (2007:55). Playing “classics” is seen as a novelty in the U.S., although it is a significant part of steel band repertoire history. Songs such as “Yellow Bird,” “Matilda,” and “Mary Ann,” are over-played, fostering a limiting association between pan and its musical potential. Yet, pannists continue to oppose the static, “tropical island” stereotypically repertoire in favor culturally significant and musically diverse selections. Instrument demand in the U.S. is high, in many cases outstripping the supply. Concurrently, Glenn Rowsey feels “… the growing public education scene will increase the
legitimization [of pan] at the university level.”

The incorporation of pan into educational and competitive festivals in several U.S. states implies enough interest to support these endeavors.

Areas for future research that have already been mentioned include an investigation of pan activities at historically black colleges and universities, adult community steel band, pan diasporas other than the U.S., and pan in mainstream U.S. media and the music industry. Other topics could include an examination of the World’s Fair and other similar international cultural expositions to see how they have contributed to, or diverged from, the repeated repertoire and imagery of the history of the exoticization and essentialization of pan, and then compare these to the current Smithsonian Folklife Festival insofar as to whether or not such cultural expositions provide respectful and educational representations of diverse global musicultures, or instead provide musicultures through the lens tropicalism and Orientalism. A discussion of the Narell family’s influence on U.S. pan history would also be warranted.

With the rise of steel bands in the U.S., the touring of Trinidadians steel bands seemed to wane. It would be fascinating to better flesh out the connection between the two, if any. Moreover, why does the West Indian Day parade not seem to receive as much mainstream media attention as the NYC St. Patrick’s Day parade or the Gay Pride parade? Lastly, the pan movement within educational institutions is perhaps the primary locale for the pan movement within the United States. Yet, these academies rarely collaborate in a meaningful way with West Indian diasporic community pan groups. Should that gap be bridged, and if so, how should it be achieved?

Ultimately, there are conclusions to be drawn regarding the overall state of steel band in the United States within academia. First, large numbers of steel bands in the U.S., if not the majority, are housed in educational institutions. Second, steel bands are experiencing steady

---

271 Glenn Rowsey, email message to author, January 7, 2013.
growth. While some bands focus on re-creating Trinidadian music, or their perception of Trinidadian or “island” music, others acknowledge the pedagogical importance, and musical and artistic value, of moving beyond pure re-creation into original compositions or at least exploring other musical styles. Pan educators in the United States are often challenged by having received no pedagogical training in the idiom, and in some cases never having played in a steel band, yet it entered the collegiate system in the 1970s and since then little has been done to disseminate pedagogy. Many audiences cannot discern between a good steel band and a bad one. Each of these statements is a reality owing to the histories, individuals, and musicultural circumstances found at the intersection of Trinidadian pan in its various locales in the United States and its academic institutions. Bearing in mind its legacy, let pan progress and let the art form move forward in the United States, with quality, integrity, and legitimacy.
APPENDIX A

UNITED STATES PAN PUBLISHING COMPANY INFORMATION

Coyle Drums
www.coyledrums.com
    Established in 1998 by Alan Coyle, and began publishing in 2002
    Styles: rock/pop, classical, Latin jazz, soca, calypso, (solo available)
    Primary composers & arrangers: Mike Catania, Gregory L. Gumina, Tracy Thornton,
    Bruce Weil, Kenyon Williams
    70 published works

Engine Room Publishing
www.engineoompublishing.com
    Established in 2008 by David Knapp, Adam Grisé, and Jason Schreiber
    Styles: jazz & Latin, soca & calypso, classical, bomb, (solo & chamber available)
    Primary composers & arrangers: Adam Grisé, David Knapp, Jason Schreiber
    29 published works

Hillbridge Music
www.hillbridge.com
    Established in 1998 by James Leyden and J. Marc Svaline
    Styles: Broadway/movies, Caribbean/Latin, folk songs, jazz & pop, classics, patriotic,
    Christmas, Hannukah
    Primary composers & arrangers: Ed Anderson, Mike Bento, Gary Gibson, Robert
    Greenidge, Franz Grissom, Dan Harrison, Ray Holman, James Leyden, Charlene Lusk,
    Tom Miller, Jeff Narell, Barbara Porter, J. Marc Svaline
    162 published works

Jeff Narell
www.jeffnarell.com
    Established in 1998 by Jeff Narell
    Styles: Latin, soca, bossa nova, reggae, calypso
    Primary composer and arranger: Jeff Narell
    6 published works

---

272 This information was compiled in the fall of 2008, unless otherwise noted.

273 Coyle Drums offered 55 published works as of December 2012.

274 Other composers and arrangers include Dave Longfellow, J.B. Morford, and Tracy Thornton as of December 2012.

275 Engine Room Publishing offered 63 published works as of December 2012.

276 Jeff Narell offered nine published works as of December 2012.
Mannette Steel Drums
www.mannettesteeldrums.com
Established in 2000 by Ellie Mannette and began publishing music in 2001
Company originally started in 1992 as the University Tuning Project
Styles: panorama, calypso, samba, jazz, beguine, soca, funk, pop, Christmas, Afro-Cuban, cha cha, guanguancó
Primary composers & arrangers: Phil Hawkins, Ray Holman, Tom Miller
47 published works (all come from Pan Ramajay Productions or Pnote Music)

Pan Press, Inc.
www.panpress.com
Established in 1998 by Paul G. Ross and Kevin Jocius
Styles: pop/rock, reggae, bossa nova, funk, African, bolero, Caribbean pop, calypso, ballad, soca, ska, songo, samba, cha cha, classical, panorama, march (solo & duets available)
Primary composers & arrangers: Cliff Alexis, Robert Chappell, Paul G. Ross, Liam Teague
53 published works

Pan Ramajay Productions
www.ramajay.com
Established in 1993 by Tom Miller
Company originally started in 1989 as Panscripts
Styles: soca, calypso, beguine, chutney soca, reggae, Brazilian choro, Latin-jazz, samba, African 12/8, mazuka, panorama, cha cha, holiday, Afro-Cuban, ballad, funk, pop/jazz, waltz
Primary composers & arrangers: Darren Dyke, Ray Holman, Rick Kurasz, Alan Lightner, Tom Miller, Othello Molineaux, Andy Narell, Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, Chris Tanner, Liam Teague
62 published charts

Panyard, Inc.
www.panyard.com
Established in 1990 by Ron Kerns and Shelly Irvine
Styles: panorama, soca, calypso, island favorites, pop, contemporary, Latin, reggae, jazz, Christmas, ragtime, classical, anthems (solo & duets available)
Primary composers & arrangers: Franz Grissom, Phil Hawkins, Ray Holman, Shelly Irvine, Ron Kerns, Steve Popernack, Len “Boogsie” Sharpe
174 published charts

277 Mannette Steel Drums/Mannette Music Instruments did not sell sheet music as of December 2012.
278 Pan Press, Inc. offered 68 published works as of December 2012.
279 Pan Ramajay Productions offered 106 published works as of December 2012.
**Pnote Music**
www.pnotemusic.com
Established by Phil Hawkins
Styles: calypso, cha cha, salsa, Afro-Cuban, soca, samba, panorama (solo available)
Primary composer and arranger: Phil Hawkins
21 published charts

**Tropical Shores Productions**
www.tropicalshores.net
Established in 1997 by Brad and Linda Shores
Styles: Latin, classical, bossa nova, calypso, island, rhumba, reggae, rock, funk, holiday, patriotic, jazz, tango, religious
Primary composers & arrangers: Ed Anderson, Brad Shores
57 published charts

**Two Trees Music**
www.twotreesmusic.com
Established in 2007 by Gary Gibson
Styles: calypso, spiritual, cha cha, classical, bomb, jazz, ska, reggae, bossa nova
Primary composer & arranger: Gary Gibson
13 published charts

694 total works

---

280 Pnote Music did not sell sheet music as of December 2012.

281 Tropical Shores Productions had 155 published works as of December 2012.

282 Two Trees Music had 22 published works as of December 2012.

283 There was a total of 814 works as of December 2012.
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR PUBLISHING COMPANIES AND PAN PROFESSIONALS

Questions for Publishers

How long has your company been in existence?

Approximately how many charts do you sell annually?

Rank the genres that you sell by popularity.

Rank the composers that you sell by popularity.

What are your most popular music sales (specific pieces)?

Questions for Professionals

How many years have you been professionally involved with steel drums?

How many groups do you work with, or see and hear, annually?

What are the most popular steel band pieces in the U.S.?

Rank the most popular genres played in the U.S.

Rank the most popular composers performed by U.S. steel bands.
APPENDIX C

ENSEMBLE WINNERS


2013: Steel Pan Ensemble

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Sam Naishtat</td>
<td>“Song By Ya Road”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Tyler Swick</td>
<td>“Riverside”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Tyler Swick</td>
<td>“Quartet No. 1”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2006: II. Duo for Marimba and Pan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Robert Chappell</td>
<td>&quot;Open Window&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Robert Houpe</td>
<td>“Elemental Introversion”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Ben Wahlund</td>
<td>“Four Sketches for Sam”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1996: II. Steel Drum Ensemble (Concert Style, No Transcriptions or Arrangements)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Winner</th>
<th>Composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Paul G. Ross</td>
<td>&quot;For the Day&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Khris Dodge</td>
<td>&quot;The Truth Out There&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Paul G. Ross</td>
<td>&quot;Realization for Steel Band&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Batson, Dawn Kirsten. “Pan Into the 21st Century: The Steelband as an Economic Force in Trinidad and Tobago.” Diss, University of Miami.


177


Maxime, Gideon. 1994. 41 Years of Pan.


182


Tanner, Christopher George. 2000. “Developing a Curriculum for Steel Band at the University Level.” Diss, West Virginia University.


Williams, Kenyon Clay. 2003. “...By Which All Others are Judged: An Analytical Look at the Arranging Styles of Four Panorama Arrangers With an Original Composition for Steel Drum Ensembles.” Diss, University of Kentucky.


Personal Interviews Cited:

Bach, Jan. Email (April 11, 2010).
Bailey, Chanler. Email (September 29, 2008).
Benkeser, Peggy. Email (January 19, 2011).
Butters, Steve. Email (January 12 & February 15, 2011).
Campbell, James. Email (February 15, 2011).
Coyle, Alan. Email (September 19, 2008).
Crosby, Bobby. Email (September 19 & 20, 2011).
Delamater, Elizabeth. Email (March 31, 2011).
Doctor, Bruce. Email (December 28, 2010).
Dudack, Matt. Akron, Ohio. (December 21, 2010).
Dudley, Shannon. Email (September 5 & 26, 2002).
Emrit, Ronald C. Email (January 14, 2011).
Fountain, Eric. Email (March 17 & August 4, 2014).
Garcia, Rocío. Email (December 19, 2011).
Gibson, Gary. Email (September 19, 2002; September 6, 7, & 14, 2008; September 22, 2011).
Hines, Eric. Email (January 1, 2011).
Hailey, Anthony. Email (October 4 & 27, 2011).
Hernly, Patrick. Telephone. (September 19, 2011).
Hollenbeck, Eric. Email (January 3, 2010).
Holman, Ray. Email (October 27, 2008).
Hughes, Ron. Email (December 28, 2010).
Kerns, Ron. Email (September 10, 2008).
Knapp, David. Email (September 6, 2008).
Koontz, Jason. Text (September 15, 2011).
Kurasz, Rick. Email (December 28, 2010).
Leyden, Jimmy. Email (September 30, 2008).
Longfellow, Dave. Email (October 3, 2011; August 4, 2014).
Mains, Oliver. Oberlin, Ohio (April 30, 2003).
McCutchen, Thomas. Email (September 19 & 20, 2011), Indianapolis, Indiana (November 11, 2011).
Miller, Tom. Email (October 16, 2008).
Mizma, Mike. Email (December 28 & 29, 2010).
Montgomery, Erica A. Email (January 15, 2011).
Moone, Keith. Email (July 5, 2014).
Narell, Andy. Email (October 24 & 27, 2008).
Narell, Jeff. Email (September 15, 16, & 18, 2008).
Parsons, Will. Email (December 8, 2010).
Preddie, Keith Preddie. Email (September 27, 2011).
Remy, Jeannine. Email (September 19, 2011).
Ross, Paul G. Email (September 15, 2008).
Rowsey, Glenn. Email (January 7, 2013; July 1, 2014).
Seymour, Kurry. Text. (September 15, 2011; March 11, 2014).
Sheeder, Billy. Text. (July 16, 2014).
Shores, Brad. Email (September 5, 2008).
Stout, Gordon. Email (September 16, 2011).
Siwe, Thomas. Email (December 4, 7, 14, 18, 23 & 29, 2010).
Smith, Gregory B. Email (September 20, 2011).
Svaline, J. Marc. Email (September 25, 2008).
Tanner, Chris. Email (February 24, 2007; September 7 & 10, 2008).
Teague, Liam. Email (September 6, 2008).
Teel, Allen. Email (February 10, 2014).
Werner, Scott. Email (December 29, 2010).
Williams, Kenyon. Email (October, 5, 2011).
BIographiesKetch

Janine Tiffe is part-time instructor at the Kent State University School of Music. She has served as director for two collegiate and one community steel bands, co-directed two African Ensembles, and taught an African dance course. Moreover, Tiffe has instructed college level traditional world music, rock/popular music, American roots music courses, and popular world music lecture courses. She has authored publications in *Percussive Notes* and *Musicians and Composers of the 20th Century*, and presented at academic conferences in France, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, England, and across the United States. Tiffe received Catalyst Interdisciplinary Project and Teaching Development grants at Kent State University, and was a Carol Krebs research fellow at Florida State University.

As a pannist, Tiffe has performed and competed with Women in Steel in Brooklyn, New York and the Invaders Steel Orchestra in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. She has recorded the guitar parts for a CD project of original works for steel band titled *First Impressions*. As a member of the African drumming and dance ensemble Azaguno, she performed in the 2002 Seoul International Drum Festival and FIFA World Cup ceremonies. Tiffe has been a guest instructor and clinician, and conducted workshops on pan and African drumming and dance in Florida, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and across Ohio.

Tiffe is an active member of The Society for Ethnomusicology, Delta Omicron, and the Percussive Arts Society. She completed her M.A. at Kent State University and her B.A. and B.S. from Miami University.