

Caribbean Sound

Steel Pan & World Music Ensemble

Educational Guide

About Steel Drums

Steel drumming is an integral and sentimental part of the Trinidadian and Caribbean Islands' heritage. Using drums to express joy, sorrow and ideas is a tradition which has roots in ancient Africa. Originally, all drums were handmade out of wood, animal skins, bamboo sticks and other available materials. These primitive drums produced sounds used for political and communicational purposes as well as musical entertainment. Through certain rhythmic beats on skin drums, a meeting could be summoned, a birth announced, or even a war declared.

This drumming was brought to the Caribbean between 1496 and the late 1800s by African slaves. Being frustrated with their enslavement, the Africans used a wide variety of drums and drumming techniques to express themselves. Due to violence erupting the government tried to discourage this kind of expression by outlawing the playing of skin drums. Still feeling a strong need to express themselves, the Africans then turned to other materials such as wild bamboo, paint cans and metal objects such as brake drums.

Despite the poverty and musical illiteracy of the people, they explored the marvelous potential of these metal instruments made out of discarded paint cans. The people of Trinidad discovered they could tune the cans by heating them over burning tires. They used the tires in the fire because rubber, unlike wood burned at just the right temperature to aide in the manufacturing of the steel pans.

While creating the instruments, they experimented with the number of notes they could play on each instrument and how to arrange the notes. They called these instruments pans. The music first performed on these steel drum pans was called Calypso.

In 1946, after the end of World War II, there were thousands of discarded 55-gallon oil drums left on the island of Trinidad as Trinidad is a oil-producing nation. Ellie Mannette, a native of the island, had the ingenuity to experiment with these 55-gallon oil drums and was able to produce appealing sounds with his new instruments. Young Ellie Mannette recognized that while a paint can could hold two or three notes, a 55-gallon oil drum could hold 36 or more notes. At the young age of 11, he created his first drum. Mr. Mannette is now considered to be a very prominent pioneer in the evolution of the steel drum as a musical instrument.

About the Ensemble

In the summer of 1986, founding members Barry Olsavsky, Mike Wilson and Charlotte Mabrey began *Caribbean Sound*. Throughout the evolution of *Caribbean Sound*, they have developed a passion for bringing the rich history and harmonic sound of the steel drum to their audiences through their unique personalities. Performances now include orchestral Pops and Family concerts, concert series, tours, and educational programs from elementary through the college level including workshops and residencies.

Their sound is truly a unique innovation that blends Calypso, Soca, Reggae, Samba, Mambo, Classical and Jazz genres together. An historical aspect of their current production, “An American Carnival” is the use of *Pan Around The Neck* steel drums. These instruments were especially crafted by Ellie Mannette and the University Tuning Project at West Virginia University for the band. Using a single lead, single second and bass boom with added percussion, these instruments recall the days when pan men marched through the streets of Port of Spain, Trinidad, and the surrounding towns to the rhythm of bottle and spoon.

Before the Show

Discuss some of the reasons why music is not the same throughout the world. Consider factors such as the location, history, social influence, and raw materials, etc. Locate Trinidad and Tobago on the map. How does the location of these places affect their musical history.

Discuss how slavery influenced music in the Caribbean Islands. *See About Steel Drums*. Also refer to slave trading routes along the coast of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States.

What are signal drums or talking drums? *See About Steel Drums and Vocabulary*.

How and why are steel drums invented? *See About Steel Drums*.

Discuss some of the music or musical styles of the country, culture or geographical areas the students are presently studying in Social Studies. How does it compare with the music of the Caribbean?

What common household, classroom or recyclable materials could be used to make musical instruments? Explore some of the possibilities with your students.

Begin the TLC chart included with this guide. Help students understand the relationship of the islands to Florida and the United States when they color and label the map of the Caribbean Basin.

Vocabulary

Musical Style—terms such as Calypso, Jazz and Reggae that describe a distinct type of music characterized by recognizable rhythms, harmonies, melodic ideas, and lyrics.

Calypso—a musical style that originated in Trinidad employing African, French and English words; emphasis is placed on local idioms, slang and events; this music is highly syncopated, repetitious and uses a limited number of melodic patterns.

Classical—strictly speaking, a term used to describe music composed during the latter half of the 18th century by composers such as Hadyn and Mozart; a slang expression often used to denote all “serious” music.

Culture—the arts, beliefs and customs that make up a certain way of life for a group of people at a certain time.

Ensemble—a group of musicians, dancers, or actors who perform together.

Bamboo—a tropical grass that has hard walls, and is sometimes used in the construction of instruments.

Woodwind—a musical instrument that was originally made of wood, but now is often made of metal or plastic.

Percussion—musical instruments in which sound is produced by striking (such as a drum, xylophone or piano).

Signal Drums—pitched drums that are used for communication purposes (talking drums).

Pitch—the highness or lowness of sound (not to be confused with volume).

Resonant—description of rich or long-lasting sound.

Rhythm—patterns formed by long and short notes (sounds).

Timbre—the quality of sound that distinguishes it from other sounds of the same pitch and volume.

Syncopation—a shift of accent when a normally weak beat is stressed.

After the Show

Discuss the performance. What did the students like/dislike? Why?

Describe (if possible, name) the instruments used in the performance. How many instruments were new to you?

Describe the steel drums. How do you think these instruments are made?

Discuss how the size of an instrument and what it is made of affects its sound (timbre). *See Vocabulary.* More advanced students can discuss the physics principles that govern these properties.

Discuss the terms Calypso, Classical, Pop and other types of music that were performed. How are the students able to distinguish one musical style from another. Encourage students to use their own words. *See Vocabulary.*

Complete the TLC chart with this guide.

Enrichment Activities

Divide the classroom into several groups, assigning them island names such as Trinidad, Tobago, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua and St. Kitts. Have small groups research their island and do mini-reports for the class.

Discuss different forms of communication that do not require verbal language. For example: road signs, hand signals, body language, sign language, smoke signals, etc.

Design a classroom drum to use for non-verbal communication. You may need a tool to get the students' attention during group work.

Devise simple rhythmic patterns for specific words or directions. Communicate these directions to the students with the drum. For example: clapping your hands when you want the students to stand or snapping your fingers when you would like them to sit.

Internet Connections

Visit the performers at: www.caribbeansound.net

T-L-C Learning Log

Name _____

Date _____

Directions:

Under the **T** column, record *What I Think* about Caribbean music, specifically steel drums.

Under the **L** column, record *What I Learned* about Caribbean music, specifically steel drums.

Under the **C** column, record *How My Thinking Has Changed* about Caribbean music, specifically steel drums.

T *What I Think* about Caribbean music.

L *What I Learned* about Caribbean music.

C *How My Thinking Has Changed* about Caribbean music,

Important Dates

1498-1797

Columbus conquered Trinidad for Spain.

1595

The English sacked Trinidad.

1637

The Dutch sacked Trinidad.

1661

Dutch established trade to the West Indies.

1783

French-speaking planter immigrants and their African slaves arrived. The French elite became the dominant social and political force in Trinidad. The French people outnumbered the English, although the English ruled. With them, the French brought Carnival with the Season lasted from Christmas through Ash Wednesday.

1797

Spain surrendered to the British navy.

1797-1834

Carnival became an important institution for whites and free coloreds.

1834

The Act of Emancipation was introduced.

1834-1859

Canboulay started at midnight on Sunday.

Late 1830's

East Indians started arriving in Trinidad to work the sugar plantations, filling the gap of workers created by the end of slavery.

1838

Slavery was abolished on August 1 (Emancipation).

1848-1917

East Indian and Chinese indentured labor imported.

1850's

Carnival was regarded as increasingly disreputable.

1858-1884

Canboulay was abolished in order to fix the commencement of Carnival at 6:00am Monday morning.

1860's

Carnival was referred to as "Jamet" Carnival.

1870's-1900

Language changed from French Creole to English.

1883

Ban on the drums presented the Carnival bands with the serious problem of finding a substitute instrument for their tent practices and masquerade processions.

1883

Tamboos began. Instrument names were Bass, chandlers, cutters and Foule'.



1888

Tobago merged with Trinidad.

1890's

String bands or country orchestras were introduced into Carnival.

1895-1920's

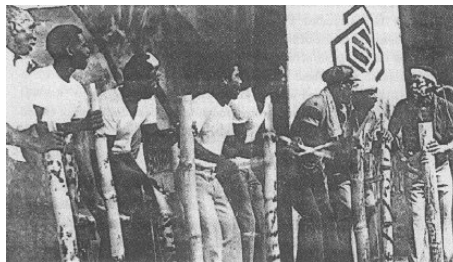
The trombone, clarinet, cornet and later the saxophone were introduced into the Carnival orchestra.

1900's

The language of songs in the bands shifted from French to English.

1901-1911

The first Tamboo-Bamboo bands were created by the lower class for Carnival in protest against the string bands lack of rhythmic music.



1920's

Calypsonians emerged. They called themselves Calysonians, not chantwel singers. They were accompanied by string bands.

1935

Pre-melody drums began with names like ping pong, round the world, contrary, bass boom. These drums were rhythmic in nature.

1935

Alexander's Ragtime Band from New Town appeared on the streets claiming to be the first to beat tin cans and dust bins. This was the first year they used the name Alexander's Ragtime Band. They were formally called the Newton Calvary Tamboo-Bamboo Band.

1937

The police forbade Tamboo-Bamboo sticks because rival bands were fighting.

1937

Metal and tin eventually replaced the Tamboo-Bamboo bands.



1938

The movie "Alexander's Ragtime Band" premiered.

1939-1945

Birth of the modern steel band.

1941

The names "Pan" and "iron" bands were used (with both pitched and non-pitched instruments).

1942-1945

Carnival was suspended because of WWII. Pan beaters were improving their craftsmanship.

1945-1960

Period of consolidation of the modern steel band.

1946

The first Carnival after WWII. "Spree" and the John John Steel Band played for the Colonial government and the upper class.

1946-1947

The 55-gallon drum was introduced.

1949

Formation of a steel band association entitled Trinidad and Tobago Steel Band Association (TTSSBA).

1950's

The Steel Band Music Festival started as an effort to channel energy into a more sophisticated competition and also to help stop violent rivalries between bands. The first competition was held at the Roxy Theatre and was won by the Boys Town Steel Band.

1950's

Steel bands began to function as independent stage sides apart from playing mas, jumping up and road marching. Pan Around the Neck was used to make the steel band mobile.



1951

First tour by TASPO (Trinidad All Steel Percussion Orchestra) to England under the direction of Joseph Griffith.

1952-1953

The all-girl steel band *Girl Pat Steel Orchestra* was formed.

1956

Bands were using the full 55-gallon oil barrels for bass pans.

1960's

The Golden era for the development of the steel band.

1960's

Steel bands began to use racks with wheels.

1962

On August 31, Trinidad and Tobago became independent nations of the English Commonwealth.

1963

The first Panorama Competition was held.

1964

National Steel band picked 22 players, one of which was Clifford Alexis.

1966

The Steel Band Association organized its own annual music festival and brought professional adjudicators from England. TTSBA changed its name to the National association of Trinidad and Tobago (NATTS).

1970's

The Panorama Syndrome (a concentration of total pan effort to prepare for Panorama).

1971

The formation of the Steel Band Improvement Committee (SIC) by Dr. Williams.

1972

SIC was renamed Pan Trinbago

1980's

Era of the New Dawn.

1981

The first School Steel Band Music Festival was held.

1988

The death of George Goddard, founder of the Trinidad and Tobago Steel Band Association.