

Another opportunity.

After the best part of 6 years Funland Serenaders has grown from one tune played by 6 tenors, 2 single guitar pans, a scratcher and a Dudup to a steelband that plays in both single and multiple formation. Currently only 5 of our members play only one pan and these are all Soprano players. Two are new and relative beginners so their focus is concentrated on command of the instrument, technic and the band's repertoire. Another new player has a conflict of interest between pan and football, sooner or later she will choose. Another plays in at least two other project steelbands so has much to maintain The fifth is preoccupied with teaching & training our new members but also plays some elements of percussion. All the remaining players play pan on at least 2 instruments, in some cases 3 or more.

The confidence, understanding awareness and ability to play **for** the band has been a very significant aspect of the band's development.

Three of the most common challenges that many steelbands suffer from is poor playing technic, erratic and/or unreliable rhythm in the pan sections as well as erratic and/or unreliable rhythm in the percussion section.

Challenge is the polite description, it can also be described as a recipe for disaster. At best it can be an excruciating discomfort for some players to the point that what started out being a potentially exciting and vibrant new activity becomes a duty that is only full of woe and dread with almost no where to turn.

When taking part in group activities such as playing music in a band it makes big difference when the ration of accomplished players to the beginners or learners is at least 70% accomplished – 30% beginners or greater. The smaller the percentage of beginners the quicker they will learn.

This gives those who are learning the support they need to be able to develop the essential elements that will enable them to execute their parts accurately and correctly.

For these players to have a chance they must have command of their instrument otherwise their progress will be very slow and severely restricted. They will also frustrate the hell out of the others around them because they are holding themselves back just by excluding a fundamental requirement, command of their instrument.

One of the most encouraging properties of steel pans is that you can walk up to a instrument, pick up sticks and play a tune or something recognizable in a few minute from moment one. This is also one of the biggest handicaps because many players never develop beyond this approach, net result they can play/take part in a collection of tunes on their chosen instrument but so often with questionable ability and that is all. They can't play the instrument.

For many it is not considered necessary to learn the instrument, all they need is a book full of notes, a music stand to put the book on, the pan of their choice and off they go. When something doesn't work or sound right they will invariably point at the notes, the inanimate piece of paper gets the blame for supplying incorrect information or the lack of sufficient hieroglyphic description to ensure their correct interpretation and subsequent execution.

For melodies & arranged parts to have a chance to be played correctly all the elements that integrate and support these aspects need to be executed and delivered correctly.

In the simplest terms there are three basic aspects to music.

When they are presented as the 3 corners of an equilateral triangle framed in a circle then this point is demonstrated and easy to understand at a glance.

Rhythm at the top, melody and harmony as the left and right corners but Rhythm is King. For melody and harmony to make sense they have to use rhythm to express themselves.

In Funland Serenaders we have strong players and weaker ones, we have those who learn and “catch quick” and those who need more time and assistance.

With TLC and endless patience everything is achievable, we know this because we’ve done it. A proven attitude and approach are the two fundamental elements that will allow any player to achieve their heart’s desire.

For those of you who have heard Funland play you will be aware that our music reflects the “Trini sound” as some people have described it to us. To us this is indeed a great compliment. We also know that for many pan players it was always their dream and secret desire to be able to play the “Trini sound” in a band, just like the steelbands they saw or heard from the Caribbean that were their original inspiration.

In Funland we know that we have only achieved a solid grounding and progress a few steps up the ladder but our strength is in what we have achieved and what we know is possible.

For the last few months we have been concentrating on the integration of our new players and learning new tunes.

Our immediate target is to have sufficient material to record our second CD.

With this objective in mind the band has chosen to concentrate on playing in single pan formation with a six bass.

To achieve this we have changed our approach to learning and practicing.

We don’t come together on a fixed day once a week to endlessly repeat our repertoire, we know our repertoire and we know what needs to be reviewed and improved.

Our focus is on section practice both for learning new tunes, making finer adjustments to existing pieces, adding new parts and bringing players up to scratch.

At the moment we have one bass player who has moved across from playing Soprano. As this player learns more and more of our repertoire and the new pieces we come together for practice to give her the opportunity to consolidate what she has learnt so that she plays with confidence, enjoyment and accuracy. It is one of the corner stones of our attitude and approach that we play **for** each other. The one condition that this player had to accept was that she must also maintain the full repertoire on the Tenor/Soprano pan as well. This has proved to be an advantage as it is extremely helpful when learning bass parts to tunes already known. Playing in a section allows for holidays and all other kinds of absences. Being the only bass player is a considerable responsibility, you have to be there every time for practice or rehearsal, you have to be there every time

for gigs. It's a heavier responsibility than being the drummer.
Because of our current status Funland is in a unique position to be able to offer

“ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY“

We are happy to offer this opportunity to experienced Tenor/Soprano players as well as those who would like to develop their percussive skills in “ the engine room“ or both. In addition we will also always welcome beginners who want to play pan. Should you not have an instrument one can be arranged. Should traveling with a pan & stand be problematic for you we have both “C“ & “D“ tenors here in the Panyard as well as stands. For some experienced Tenor/Soprano players we are also offering the opportunity to play bass as well under the same conditions that our current bass player has accepted. You will be expected to play both tenor and bass. We have more than one set of bass. This is an open invitation which is not restricted to specific time frames. When you already play in a band and want to expand your experience we understand this situation and can make adjustments accordingly. We have at least 2 or 3 players who play in other bands and pan projects for some time but this has never compromised what we do.

On a number of occasions in the last 10 years we have seen the results of “join the project, break the band“, there are many reasons why this can happen but it is a situation that we want to avoid.

Should you be interested in this opportunity please get in touch with our president who will pass on further information to you.

We look forward to meeting you and playing pan with you.

Yours Sincerely,

Funland Serenaders.