


REDISCOVERING THE ROOTS OF PAN:



A 1950s Steel Band. A retouched steel band postcard, courtesy of Joseph Abdo Sabga's postcard collection, from *A Journey of Memories* by J.A. Sabga. Paria Publishing, Cascade, Trinidad: 2000.

THE DEVELOPMENT, MUSIC, AND ARRANGERS OF PANORAMA

BY DR. KENYON WILLIAMS

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Over the past 20 years, the curriculum of the Western percussion university program has undergone an earthshaking evolution. The field of non-Western musical studies was defaulted by many administrators in the 1970s into the nebulous world of percussion education, where it was seized upon by a new generation of percussionists. Since then, it has become one of the driving forces behind the growth of our ever-expanding field.

Today, many forms of non-Western music are a vital part of percussion programs across the nation. African ensembles, salsa bands, taiko groups, and even Indonesian gamelans have taken root thousands of miles from their native soil. Few music cultures, however, have enjoyed as much success in the United States in recent years as the Trinidadian steel band. In 1980, the United States hosted only three university-affiliated steel bands and a handful of community steel orchestras (Parks 25). By 2001, one North American pan tuner ascertained that there were over 650 university and public school steel drum ensembles in his files alone (Svaline 49).

Since then, the number of steel bands in both educational and community-based settings has continued to grow at a rapid pace, fueled in part by the growing availability of high-quality builders and tuners in North America.

THE “AMERICAN” STEEL BAND?

A key factor in the explosion of steel bands in the United States has been the rapid growth in the number of steel

drum educators in America’s public schools and institutes of higher learning. This process began during the mid-1970s, as professors such as John Galm at the University of Colorado and G. Allen O’Connor at Northern Illinois University purchased instruments and incorporated them into their curriculum (Parks 23). Many of these fledgling steel band programs leaned heavily upon the talents of recently immigrated Trinidadians such as Ellie Mannette and Clifford Alexis in order to make the ensemble a viable reality. As students graduated from these programs, many of them went on to create their own ensembles in educational settings across the nation.

Today, this second generation of North American steel band educators is giving way to a third generation—a generation who, in most instances, has had no direct contact with a native Trinidadian or the culture that gave birth to pan. Very few of them compose their own arrangements, preferring instead to teach in the manner of a Western classical music ensemble and utilize works published by established arrangers. Most North American university-trained pannists have never learned

an arrangement by rote and have never experienced the thrill of working with an arranger as a composition comes to life for the very first time.

The insertion of this extra link in the chain—the link of musical notation—has essentially severed the connection between pannists in North America and pannists in Trinidad. A North American pan rehearsal reflects the values of the culture: organization, efficiency, and a constant emphasis on the individual and his or her relation to the score. In Trinidad, the lack of notated music causes the focus of a rehearsal to be quite different. Since the music can only be learned in a communal setting, community is valued above all else, followed closely by experimentation and ensemble ability. A Trinidadian steel band places a constant emphasis on the role of the arranger as he or she works within the community, while North American ensembles emphasize the individuals.

Using the instruments of Trinidad, American educators have re-invented the ensemble, changing it from a Trinidadian folk

instrument into a neo-Western pop music ensemble. In doing so, the North American steel band has become a unique entity. Although American steel bands have maintained some of the practices employed in Trinidadian steel bands, such as repertoire selection, basic instrumentation, and certain rehearsal techniques, they have become, by and large, an extension of formal Western musical traditions rather than

the musical traditions of the Caribbean. As steel band educator Frances Guess wrote:

These differences among the steel bands in Trinidad and those in the United States do not cause one tradition to be regarded more highly than the other; nor do they cause one tradition to be considered more authentic. The two cannot be compared to each other because each is a distinctly different type of performance ensemble. A logical question, then, would be, do the students recognize the differences between Trinidadian steel bands and North American steel bands? (Guess 59, emphasis mine.)

Many of today’s ensemble directors, themselves two, three, or even four generations removed from the importation of the instrument from Trinidad, have only experienced the “Americanized” steel band environment and cannot identify these differences for themselves. The strongest link that many steel bands in North America maintain with Trinidadian steel bands is in the selection of their repertoire. Just like their Trinidadian



The Solo Harmonites, Circa 1960. Photography Courtesy of the *Daily Express*, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

counterparts, most North American steel bands use a mix of traditional island calypsos and arrangements of popular music from the radio.

As Panorama transcriptions have been notated and published in the United States, top university and high school ensembles have begun to explore the pinnacle of steel band composition as personified in these challenging compositions. Unfortunately, many North American directors are forced to work with this music blindly, since they have little or no familiarity with either the prominent arrangers who composed it or the culture that created it. Often, the transcriptions are performed more for their perceived multicultural educational value than out of any true understanding of their cultural significance or musical content. The fact that neither the director nor the ensembles they direct can fully understand the cultural/musical concepts that they are exploring becomes lost in the race to learn the composition, thereby negating any potential pedagogical benefits.

Few North American directors can identify the names of even a handful of Trinidad's foremost arrangers. Even fewer can audiate the differences between these arrangers. The absurdity of the situation becomes apparent when a typical American steel band is compared to any other musical ensemble. No orchestra would employ a musical director who was unable to discuss the differences between Beethoven and Bach, and yet such a situation is status quo for American steel band directors. Liam Teague, a Trinidadian pan virtuoso who performs regularly throughout the U.S., has lamented, "Even though many American university steel bands are now playing top compositions from Panorama, they're just playing the notes and they really don't know what the notes mean" (Holly 41).

As the number of available Panorama transcriptions has grown, there has emerged a need for a greater understanding by Western music educators of both the music itself and the composers/arrangers who seem to conjure the music out of thin air in the panyards of Port of Spain. Within the past two decades, individual ethnomusicologists and pan enthusiasts have made great strides in documenting the history and sociological impact of the steel band movement. Scholarly treatises by Steven Stuempfle, George Goddard, Gideon Maxime, Errol Hill, and Jeffrey Thomas have laid the historical foundation for steel pan research. On their shoulders, researchers such as Jeannine Remy, Amelia Ingram, and Shannon Dudley have explored the development and cultural significance of both Panorama and steel bands. However, a basic understanding of the fundamental nature of Trinidadian steel band music and the composers who have had their works published abroad is largely missing from most North American steel bands.

WHERE TO BEGIN?

The single greatest focus of steel band activity in Trinidad and, hence, musical composition, is the annual Panorama competition held during Carnival season. For this event, each band hires an arranger to orchestrate a popular three-minute calypso melody into a fantastically original, eight-minute showcase of the group's musical skill.¹ These intricate arrangements are typically taught by rote and therefore are most often never notated.

Over the past two decades, ethnomusicologists and pan en-

thusiasts from abroad have made valiant efforts to notate and publish many of these compositions but have faced the combined obstacles of market forces (few non-Trinidadian bands are willing or able to perform these massive works) and cultural conflict (Trinidadians are rightfully distrustful of foreigners seeking to "tief (steal) we culture" for the sake of profit). Fortunately, however, 27 of these works have been published through Panyard, Inc. of Akron, Ohio. Ron Kern's and Shelly Irvine's desire to preserve these compositions is in large part responsible for the dissemination of this music beyond the borders of the island. Most North American steel bands turn to these painstaking arrangements when they seek to perform the finest works in Trinidadian music by Trinidad's greatest arrangers.

To best understand these works, one must first come to understand the composer/arranger who created them. But to understand the composer, one must first acknowledge the culture and environment that fueled that composer's imagination. Since, however, the evolution of the steel band movement in Trinidad is a widely known and widely researched topic, it will not be addressed within the confines of this brief article.² Rather, this article will discuss the musical environment that colors all aspects of the creation, performance, and interpretation of a Panorama composition.

THE BIRTH OF PANORAMA

By the late 1950s the steel band movement had become a recognizable force across Trinidad. Loosely organized groups of mostly unemployed youths performed on the streets and in haphazard music competitions across the island. Due to internal politics and questionable judging practices, these competitions often fueled continued animosity between the rival bands.

In 1959, the newly established Carnival Development Committee, an organization designed to promote carnival across the island, began to sponsor an event called "Steel Band Bacchanal" the Friday preceding Carnival. The goal of this competition was to create a national competition under governmental guidance with impartial judges in a setting that would encourage the bands to work together to present a quality show rather than to compete against one another. Unfortunately, the event was poorly funded, with first prize being roughly equivalent to \$97 (U.S.), causing few bands and even fewer spectators to participate (Steumpfle 264).

In 1963, the president of the Steelbands Association, George Goddard, suggested that if the prize amount were raised, band and audience interest would increase. As a result, the show was renamed "Panorama" and the top prize was tripled to \$1,000TT. Twenty-four of the top bands on the island registered to participate, setting the stage for what would become the most contested event in Trinidad (Goddard 111–2).

THE EFFECT OF THE JUDGES

From the beginning, the primary force behind Panorama and its music has been simple: money. Above all else, Panorama is a competition in which the goal is to impress the judges, who in turn award prize money based upon a variety of factors. If one looks at a recent Panorama score sheet as utilized by the judges, one can quickly observe the power that

the judges have had in the development of the steel band (see Figure 1). Here, one can see that 60 out of 100 possible points are based upon the skill of the arranger rather than the skill of the ensemble.

This lopsided scoring system (causing some frustrated Trinidadians to rechristen Panorama “Arrange-o-rama”) can be attributed to the evolution of Panorama judging. In order to create a truly impartial judging panel, most judges selected for Panorama have historically had very little to no connection with the steel band movement. Rather, they are selected for their perceived musical knowledge in other areas, such as music education or a choral background.

Due to the disconnection created by a conservative, classically inclined panel sent to judge what was, essentially, a folk-music competition, it is understandable that the judging system would evolve to focus upon and reward ensembles who paid the greatest attention to concerns familiar to the judges. For this reason, Panorama performances are largely judged based upon Western musical issues most easily interpreted through the arrangement itself, rather than the unfamiliar performance practices of the steel band movement (e.g., improvisation, engine room “groove,” etc.). This issue has become compounded through the years as most musically educated Trinidadian pannists would prefer to avoid the controversies and alienation intrinsic to Panorama judging and have therefore declined offers to serve on judging panels.³

Unfortunately in Trinidad, Panorama has become the primary preoccupation of virtually every band on the island. Unable to compete with the rise of DJs at private events, most steel bands rely upon the prize money generated from Panorama and/or the sponsorships generated from their Panorama

successes in order to stay financially viable. This places a great amount of pressure upon the most important figure in Panorama, the arrangers. The arrangers, in turn, have adapted their music to proven formulas that have won in past competitions, formulas given the “stamp of approval” by the roar of the crowd and the affirmation of the judges. These formulas include



Tony Williams, photograph taken by Kenyon Williams, Jan 28, 2002.

fast chromatic runs, blazing tempos, exciting bass-oriented grooves, and easily identifiable musical forms. As Andy Narell, the first non-Trinidadian ever to serve as a Panorama arranger lamented, “The whole culture of winning Panorama is so tied to Carnival that you don’t dare come in with a tempo that’s a few shades under someone else’s tempo or you’re gonna get knocked out of the Savannah. It’s become almost the antithesis of uniqueness and diversity...the obsession with winning Panorama has caused everyone to sound more and more alike” (Goodwin).

Figure 1: 2001 Panorama adjudication score sheet courtesy of Pan Trinbago.

Panorama 2001						
<u>ADJUDICATION SCORE SHEET</u>						
Competitor	_____				Date:	_____
Composition	_____					
(+) denotes outstanding effort. (-) denotes improvement needed.						
CRITERIA		+	-	MAX PTS	COMMENTS	SCORE
ARRANGEMENT				40		
Introduction						
Re-harmonization						
Melodic development						
Motivic development						
GENERAL PERFORMANCE:				40		
Interpretation						
Dynamics						
Creativity						
Balance						
QUALITY OF SOUND				10		
Quality/blending of pans						
RHYTHM				10		
Consistency						
Appl. of rhythm section						
TOTAL						

EARLY PANORAMA ARRANGING

In the early stages of Panorama, this was hardly the case. Unsure what was expected of them, many of the bands simply performed their favorite arrangement of a popular calypso for the first Panorama in 1963. Most of these arrangements were simplified transcriptions of the tunes they had heard over the radio. Tony Williams, however, used the Pan Am North Stars to set a new standard for steel band arranging and in the process swept the competition:

I played “Dan is the Man in the Van,” and, at that time, I listened for the chords, and the calypsonians didn’t place many chords in the tune, it was simple chords...so I put a downward progression in the bass line, so that sounded different, while the melody stayed horizontal, I used a downward progression and that sounded good...It sounded better, so that’s what caused me to win: while the other bands stayed on one chord, I made different chords. I believe that’s what the judges heard (Interview).

The next year, Tony returned with “Mama Dis is Mas” and stretched beyond the basic form of the original calypso by composing an original introduction and coda. To his competitors’ further astonishment, he modulated the band up a fourth and inserted an original variation of the verse and chorus in a different key. During this variation, he demonstrated a new approach to orchestration, as well. By moving the original verse

and chorus melody into the lowest pans in the ensemble, he freed the soprano instruments to perform new variations without straying so far beyond the harmonic and melodic contour of the original material that he would lose his audience's attention. Today, all of these concepts are common practice in virtually every Panorama composition (Dudley 158).

The next year, another set of arranging innovations emerged with Bobby Mohammed and the Guinness Cavaliers. First, Mohammed doubled the size of his ensemble to 150 players, more than twice the size of any other group. Second, he emphasized short, repeated jam sections, similar to Latin montunos that are based on a cyclical two- to four-chord sequence, which further freed his arrangements from the structure of the original composition. Third, he emphasized what ethnomusicologist Shannon Dudley describes as "drama": unison rhythmic breaks, call-and-response patterns, and a variety of bass lines that even doubled the melody. "Bobby Mohammed recognized that a stage performance before a seated, stationary audience gave scope for large, dramatic musical gestures and effects that wouldn't be well-received in music for dancing on the road" (169).

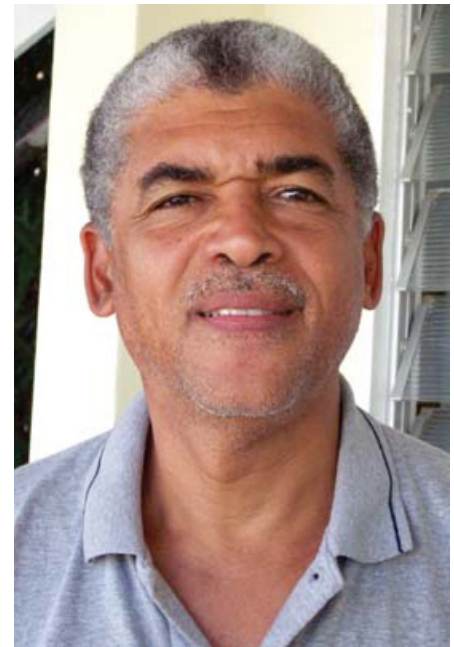
UNDERSTANDING PANORAMA FORM

The formal structure of the modern Panorama arrangement used by today's arrangers is similar to the form that was established in the late 1960s by such notable pan figures as Tony Williams and Bobby Mohammed. Panorama arrangers take the basic verse and chorus of each year's most popular commercially released calypsos and create a double theme and variation form (see Figure 2).⁴ Arrangers typically begin the composition with

designed to simultaneously excite the crowd and impress the adjudicators.

RAY HOLMAN

After Bobby Mohammed, the next arranger to radically alter the Panorama paradigm would become one of the first panmen to gain international recognition as both a performer and composer: perhaps the most performed Trinidadian arranger in the United States, Ray Holman. Known as the



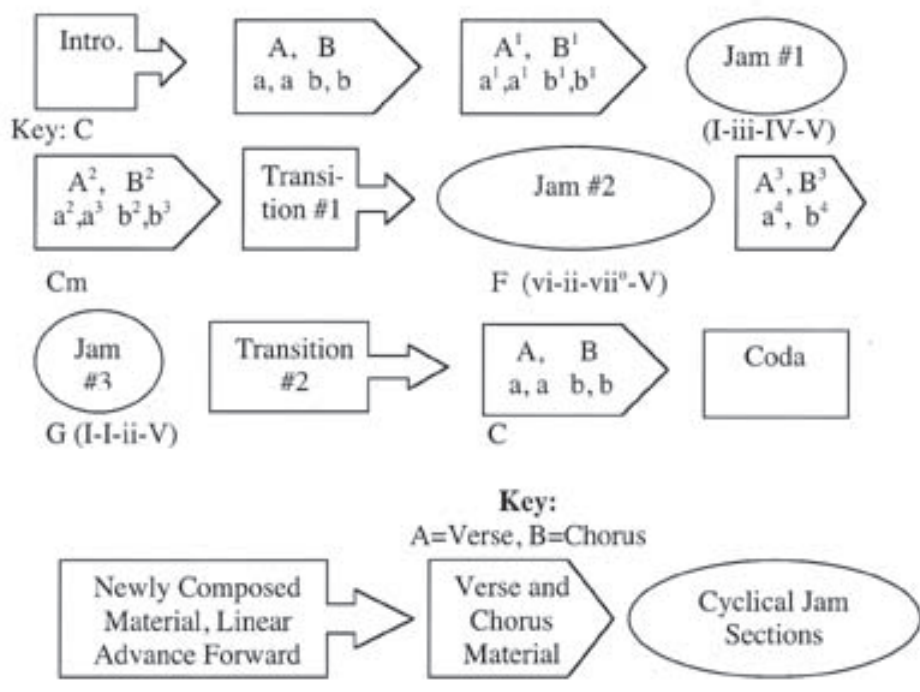
Ray Holman. Photograph by Kenyon Williams

"grand old man of pan" in Trinidad, he is the only arranger still active in steel bands who also arranged for the very first Panorama in 1963. Holman rose to prominence due to his use of chord extensions to reharmonize the original calypso melody he was working with. A quick analysis of any of Ray's arrangements quickly reveals his love for unusual progressions, diminished chord structures, and

suspended fourths in a medium usually dominated by simplistic I-IV-V-I chords.

Unlike most pan arrangers, Ray can read and write music to a basic degree, and he usually works out his chord progressions on a string guitar at home before coming to rehearsal. Each evening, one can find Ray constantly composing new ideas over the calypso's reharmonized chord structure, which he notates on a sheet of paper and often refers back to while crafting a new idea. Pat Bishop, a noted classically trained

Figure 2: Simplified form of a "typical" Panorama arrangement. In this sample diagram, the initial A and B material is repeated (a,a and b,b). Also, note that the horizontal length of each graphic reflects the relative length of the represented section.



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choral director in Trinidad and one of the few female arrangers on the island, perhaps best summarizes Ray's music as having:

...a particular approach to harmony, which does not have to do with counterpoint. He doesn't arrange in lines, because he works on a guitar, so it's melody and chord. But the chords...are never root position triads. There's always that suspended fourth, the diminished chord...there's (always) a kind of melancholy that runs through the music, like the two faces of theatre, there's the laughter and there's the weeping, there's always that little thread, and you know when you hear that, that's Ray's music (Interview).

Unlike most early panmen, Ray was raised in a middle-class environment that, by and large, viewed steel bands as little more than street gangs. Unfortunately for Ray's mother, his home in Woodbrook was mere blocks from the Invaders' panyard. In 1957, he and a friend decided to join the band and became some of the first middle-class youths in Trinidad to be a part of the steel band movement. In the Invaders, they were welcomed with open arms by the leader of the band, Ellie Mannette.

Holman's primary musical education came from inside the Invaders' panyard. There, he began to combine the lush sounds of Mannette's pans with the music of his middle-class surroundings—music in equal parts from the Mighty Sparrow, Gershwin, and Schumann. Although he had become the Invaders' lead arranger in only a few short years, he and several other boys left Invaders in 1962 to revitalize another Woodbrook band that had gone defunct, Starlift. In Starlift, Ray soon became known as a gifted arranger, but even he was taken aback by the new sounds that began to emerge at the first Panorama in 1963 (Holman).

It didn't take him long to catch on to the new concepts being presented by Williams and Mohammed. By 1966, Holman had developed his own voice, utilizing elaborate modulations, jam sections, minor-key variations, and jazz-style chord extensions. In 1969, he even altered the primary pulse of the steel band by introducing a new style of strumming for the background pans. During the 1960s, the primary strumming pattern was very downbeat oriented. In 1969, Ray introduced a more syncopated strum pattern that is recognizable to virtually every modern pannist (see Figures 3 and 4).

Perhaps Ray's greatest accomplishment, however, has been the introduction of the "own tune" into the repertoire of the Panorama arranger. After having won two Panorama championships with the band Starlift in the late 1960s, Ray decided to compose an original calypso, his "own tune," for the band to use in 1972. Despite vigorous objections from many in the calypso community, Ray's composition "Pan on the Move" was performed at Panorama.

This ground-breaking concept has since become somewhat common in Panorama; however, many bands prefer not to use an arranger's "own tune" due to the fact that the Savannah crowds usually prefer arrangements of tunes with which they are already familiar. While many arrangers, including Ray, spend thousands of dollars each year to record a studio version of their calypso complete with lyrics for radio play and commercial release, such calypsos are invariably given less airplay, which is a distinct disadvantage for a competitive steel

Figure 3: A 1960s strum pattern.



Figure 4: Ray Holman strum pattern, 1969.



band. As a result, many steelbandmen feel that Ray's compositions are "unwinnable" at Panorama, primarily because they recognize that he is unwilling to resort to the fast tempos and chromatic clichés that have become commonplace among the finalists (Dudley, 164–5). As Harold Headley, professor of music at the University of the West Indies, notes, "Even though he has done a tune for Panorama...he thinks about the future—after Panorama. His arrangement is not just for today" (Interview).

The introduction to Holman's "Pan Woman," written in 1987, gives a good picture of Holman's style (see Figure 5). In this 22-bar introduction, Holman utilizes fully diminished subtonic chords, suspended fourths, and concludes with a unison hemiola rhythm that leaves the listener searching for both the tonic and the downbeat. Considering the fact that most Panorama arrangements are built upon simple root-position triads and downbeat-oriented rhythmic motifs, it is easy to understand the respect that has developed for Holman's arranging skills.

Another of Ray's compositional traits is the incorporation of challenging keys in multiple sharps, such as E major and B major. This can be traced to his predilection toward composing his music on a string guitar, an instrument that naturally inclines itself toward these keys. Also, Ray tends to hold each variation to a firm harmonic foundation that is established in the initial verse and chorus. This harmonic structure is constantly reinforced by the ever-present strum patterns of the double seconds, guitars, and cellos, while the primary melodic material is typically reserved only for the upper pans.

LEN "BOOGSIE" SHARPE

The next steel band arranger to take center stage was, in many ways, both a singular phenomenon and a direct descendent of Ray Holman's innovations. Selywyn Tarradath, the former education officer of Pan Trinbago, states the following about the near-mythical status of Len Sharpe, or "Boogsie," as he is better known in Trinidad:

Boogsie is a prodigy. I believe in reincarnation. I believe that Boogsie is the reincarnation of both Mozart and Charlie Parker. From two years old he could do anything...there was a panside in his yard, and at two years old, he would sit down there and hear



Figure 5: Three-staff reduction of introduction of "Pan Woman." Courtesy of Panyard, Inc., Akron, Ohio. Audio sample courtesy of Sanch Electronics/COTT.

The image displays a three-staff musical score for the introduction of "Pan Woman." The score is organized into four systems, each containing three staves. The instruments are labeled as follows:

- System 1:** Tenor/Drum (Ten), Double Bass/Guitar (D. Sec./Guit.), and Cello/Bass (Cello/Bass).
- System 2:** Tenor/Drum (Ten), Double Bass/Guitar (D. Sec./Guit.), and Cello/Bass (Cello/Bass).
- System 3:** Tenor/Drum (Ten), Double Bass/Guitar (D. Sec./Guit.), and Cello/Bass (Cello/Bass).
- System 4:** Tenor/Drum (Ten), Double Bass/Guitar (D. Sec./Guit.), and Cello/Bass (Cello/Bass).

The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first two systems feature complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests, while the third and fourth systems show more melodic lines with fewer notes. The Cello/Bass part in the first two systems is mostly rests, while in the third and fourth systems, it plays a steady, rhythmic accompaniment.

all the arrangements, and when the band's finished practicing and fellows trying to learn the tune, he would go and show them a thing or two (Interview).

Sharpe was born in St. James, directly alongside Woodbrook, in 1953. The yard of his house was used as a panyard by the steel band Crossfire, and by the age of five, his father began to enroll him in music festivals and contests where he would regularly take top prize. Soon, young Boogsie joined Ray Holman's band, Starlift, where he played until 1972, the fateful year in which Ray would unveil his own tune in Panorama for the first time.



Len "Boogsie" Sharpe. Photograph by Kenyon Williams

After Carnival, Boogsie was asked by the band captain to arrange a few tunes while Ray focused on his 9-to-5 job of teaching Spanish at a boy's school in Port of Spain. In Boogsie's own words, "The tunes came off good, but Ray didn't like that...there was a little confusion, like. So, me and my friends who were with the band, we used to get in a car when the band finished practicing at night time, make a block, come back when everybody gone, open the tent, pull out the pans, and practice" (Interview).

Eventually, Boogsie and his five friends left Starlift to form their own band with the intention of becoming the first steel band on the island to incorporate brass, vocalists, and electronic instruments on a regular basis. Deciding on the evolutionary name of Phase II, the band unfortunately soon fell on hard times and began to accept new members so that they might compete in Panorama in order to attract sponsorship.

Taking a cue from his earlier mentor, Ray Holman, Boogsie decided to enter the competition with his own tune. Thus began a trend that would lead to Phase II becoming known as one of the most innovative steel bands on the island. Even though they were not able to achieve their original goals as a small, experimental electro-pan ensemble, the band became known as the only ensemble to consistently program original works for Panorama and became the first band to win Panorama with an "own tune" in 1987 (Tarradath, *Band*).

As an arranger, Boogsie is known by his contemporaries as an innate genius, a man with no formal musical education, un-

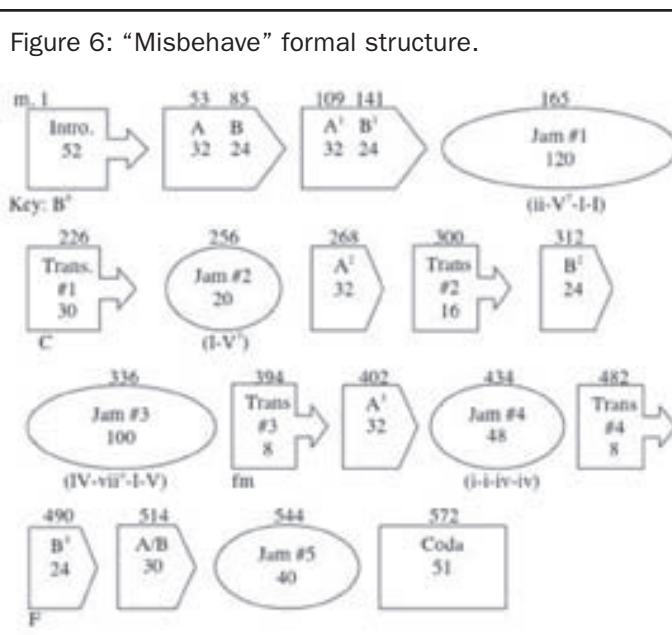
able to read or notate music, but who can summon fantastically original melodies, harmonies, and forms out of the air at sheer will. In the panyard, Boogsie simply sits at the front of each section, calling out note names and singing rhythms, rarely touching a pan, only moving on once the section as a whole understands what is to be learned that night. As Pat Bishop noted,

I think what Sharpe produces from his method is nothing short of miraculous. Sometimes, you go to listen, and you go "Oh God, what is Sharpe doing?" But it's always absolutely riveting...I've never been failed to be amazed...most times, he has an absolutely original outcome from this process...It seems to me that Boogsie sometimes just casts everything into the lap of the gods: this will sound good on this pan and this will sound good on this pan, and I'll put everything together (Interview).

Indeed, Boogsie is best known as being one of the few arrangers who is not afraid to completely ignore conventional formal and harmonic expectations. In his striking 1996 selection, "Misbehave,"⁵ one can observe the highly unusual form of the composition (see Figure 6). This analysis demonstrates Boogsie's preference for jam sections as evidenced by their sheer number and length. This indulgence in the jam section is a natural byproduct of Sharp's inventiveness; it is the only section of the composition that is not constrained by the need to quote from or adhere to the original source material of the arrangement.

Sharpe, unlike Holman, conceives his music horizontally rather than vertically. That is to say, rather than being constrained by the original harmonic contour of the verse and chorus, Sharpe instead composes by creating individual lines for each instrument, as alluded to previously by Bishop. These lines are typically based upon motivic cells drawn from the original verse and chorus that are interspersed throughout the arrangement (Dudley 28).

For example, the primary A motif of "Misbehave" (see Fig-



front-page news by both the media and the general public. It is well documented in Trinidad that Sharpe has been in and out of drug and alcohol rehabilitation centers throughout his life and nearly died during Panorama 2004 due to emergency surgery performed in order to bolster his failing health. Unable to maintain a living as a pan artist based in Trinidad, he relocated during the 1990s to the United States, where he was arrested for drug possession and forced to miss two Panorama competitions while undergoing rehab in New York (Joseph).

Today, Sharpe is a potent symbol to most Trinidadians. Despite his impoverished childhood and humble background, he has become a recognized musical icon in a society that often takes its own culture for granted. Although Sharpe has achieved the status of a celebrity on his own island, one cannot help but wonder, what if? What if this genius had not been born into such a limited environment? What if he had received formal musical training as soon as his talent manifested itself?

At the end of one interview, Sharpe paused, took a deep breath, and wistfully stated, "You know what I always wanted to be? A conductor. One of them big orchestras. People listening to my music and respecting me and thing. As a boy, if I could have..." and then he shook his head, and trailed off into silence.

JIT SAMAROO

Called by many "the Maestro," due to the fact that he is one of the few pan artists on the island who can fluently read and write music, Jit Samaroo has become recognized as one of the most successful steel drum performers and arrangers in Trinidad. Born in the rural village of Lopinot, Samaroo was the seventh child of 13 children born to an Indian family of gardeners. His family was musically inclined (his mother was a versatile Indian dholak player), and he soon learned to play guitar in a parang ensemble.⁶ By age nine he left school to help his family financially. At age 10, he joined a small local steel band and was soon playing as much as his free time would allow. However, his mother's death in 1963 left the young Jit in a difficult position, forcing him to choose between his music or supporting his family. In 1967, he found a way to do both (Interview).

In order to keep the family together, Jit borrowed pans and percussion instruments and taught his brothers and sisters how to play. He had already begun to take correspondence courses in music theory and notation, and thus knew the basics of composition and arranging. Soon, the "Samaroo Kids," as they were known, a poor Indian family steel band that practiced on the dirt floor of their house with a name straight out of American pop music, became one of the only steel bands on the island whose members' entire income was generated through their music. This was due to the strength of Jit's arrangements and the dedicated virtuosity of each member (*Man*).

By 1971, Jit's arranging talents had begun to be noticed by many of the larger bands on the island, and Birch Kellman, pan tuner for the rough-and-tumble Port of Spain band Renegades, recommended Jit for the position of arranger for the band. The pairing of Jit with Renegades proved to be a highly successful one. Today, Jit Samaroo is recognized as the most successful Panorama arranger of all time, having won Panorama nine times and being the only arranger ever to score three straight victories at the national finals.

Unlike Boosie and Ray, Jit has achieved most of his success with what is described in Trinidad as a very "conservative" band, Renegades, who prefer to perform arrangements of works by established calypsonians.⁷ For many years, Jit would turn for inspiration to the works of the master pan calypsonian Lord Kitchener, the composer of perhaps the most well-



Jit Samaroo. Photograph by Kenyon Williams

loved of Samaroo's arrangements, "Pan in A Minor," written in 1987. Upon examining the score of this representative work, one will notice that Jit's grounding in traditional music theory creates an arrangement filled with simpler chord structures (usually root-position triads), but with a more developed use of secondary dominants and major/minor chord mutation (Figure 9).

The most arresting facet of any Samaroo arrangement is his skill at intertwining counter-melodies underneath the primary melodic voice. While Jit professes an affinity for the music of Bach, he rarely uses true counterpoint in his arrangements. Rather, he uses the four-cello section in his band to "fill in" new melodic material any time the primary melody holds a note or rests (note m. 4 and mm. 7–8 in Figure 9). In this way, he betrays his roots as an arranger for the small, family chamber ensemble of his youth in which each member was a virtuoso. Indeed, the most arresting facet of any Samaroo arrangement is the sheer difficulty of each individual part; no section is spared from blazing fast chromatic runs or extended countermelodies. As one pan observer noted,

He used to give those Renegades' pannists things to play that only he and his brother could play. Because, of course, he'd worked them out on the small band first. He's never lost that sense of working an arrangement out on the small band, where each player is really a soloist. And he used to go to Renegades and give them impossible things to play, and you used to say, "Hey Samaroo, Samaroo! None of them can't play that!" But he persevered (Brown).

Steel band commentator Simeon L. Sandiford observed, "Jit Samaroo is the most clinically accurate arranger of all...His unique style is strongly derived from the way he utilizes the middle and background instruments. Execution of his arrangements literally leaves the pannists drenched in sweat...You can listen to some steel band compositions over and over. You can only listen to a Samaroo arrangement, like, once a year" (Brown).

Samaroo is also recognized as the first arranger to incorpo-



Figure 9: First page of “Pan in A Minor” score. Courtesy of Panyard, Inc. Audio sample courtesy of Sanch Electronics/COTT.

PAN IN A MINOR

Composed by Alloys "Lord Kitchener" Roberts
Arranged by Jiri Samaroo

SOCA ♩ 112

The musical score is arranged for a steel band. It includes parts for TENOR, D. TENOR, D. SEC., GUITAR, 3 CELLO, 4 CELLO, and BASS. The tempo is marked SOCA ♩ 112. The score begins with a dynamic marking of *f* (forte). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines for each instrument.

rate rhythmic styles other than calypso into his arrangements. In 1989, the Renegades defied convention and incorporated the rhythms of Cuban merengue, Brazilian samba, and French Antillean zouk⁸ in their Panorama performance of “Somebody.” Although Samaroo’s engine room did not seek to perform truly authentic renditions of these various styles,⁹ the change from the traditional sounds of the engine room proved quite controversial with Pan Trinbago. As Samaroo recalled:

I had been thinking about it for years, discussing it and thing. I didn’t just do it on a whim...The [Renegades] engine room went along fine, but Pan Trinbago said, “That’s not calypso!” Well, Kitchener had recorded a song with a merengue feel that he called a calypso, so I said, “If you can tell me what is a calypso, then fine, I will work with that. Put down on paper what the melody do, the bass do...” Of course, they couldn’t do that (Interview).

CONCLUSION

As the world has grown smaller during the past century, the music of Trinidad and the Caribbean has made its way to the United States and beyond. Even the *Trinidad Guardian* has noted that pan has become “the property of the world” (Uptempo). The question then is, will non-Trinidadians take the time to responsibly inherit this legacy? Or will the United States merely colonize yet another culture, strip its music and heritage of any non-Western meaning, and reinvent it into our

own image without recognizing the great debt owed to its creators?

It is vital that every steel drum performer and educator look beyond the “pop-music” emphasis of the typical North American steel band and conscientiously incorporate works that reflect the Trinidadian roots of the instrument. Both Ray Holman and Boogie Sharpe have numerous short compositions of all difficulty levels published in the United States, including each of the aforementioned Panorama arrangements. Although very few steel bands have the ability to perform a full-scale Panorama arrangement, an educator can easily take almost any Panorama tune and selectively prune it down to the introduction, verse, chorus, and one or two variations or jams, thereby cutting a 10-minute composition down to only three or four minutes. While this approach may be frowned upon by purists, it gives students a chance to taste the true flavor of the instrument and will hopefully pique their interest in the roots of pan.

When performing Panorama arrangements, it is also extremely beneficial for educators to familiarize themselves and their ensembles with a recording of the original calypso.¹⁰ The simple step of fostering a familiarity with the source material of the arrangement is perhaps the most important yet least utilized facet of North American steel band education. Before the average Trinidadian even enters a panyard to learn an arrangement, he or she already knows the melody, harmonies, syncopations, and lyrics to virtually every tune the band performs due to their having previously heard the music on the radio.

This natural enculturation allows the ensemble to feel the flow of the arrangement, the pulse of the music, and to appreciate the skill of the arranger to a much greater degree than the typically disconnected North American pannist. It is important for us, as educators and performers, to continually remind ourselves where this music comes from, even as we explore where it will go next.

ENDNOTES

1. Until 2004, the average length was 10 minutes.
2. For a complete and thorough understanding of the development of the steel band, one should reference Steven Stuempfle's excellent text, *The Steelband Movement*, available through the University of Pennsylvania Press.
3. When asked if he would serve as a judge, one highly qualified pannist replied, "No, no way. I don't want my house burned down" (Tarradath, Interview).
4. In 2005, however, Panorama rules were altered to allow bands to use any calypso, past or present, as the basis of their arrangement. Whether or not this will hold for the future is debatable.
5. Called by Sharpe, "the best Panorama tune I ever wrote" (Interview).
6. Parang is a folkloric style of Spanish-derived music popular in rural areas of Trinidad.
7. In 2003 and 2004, however, Samaroo arranged his "own tunes" for Renegades.
8. Zouk music is a combination of international musical styles from the Caribbean, Africa, and the United States that is usually sung in the Creole dialect.
9. As Samaroo explained, "We went for the feel of the rhythms" (Interview).
10. Amazon.com, Rhyner.com, and other such Web-based resources are good starting points for locating Trinidadian calypso recordings.

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