

Nine-year-old creates history as pan arranger

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AGE knows no boundaries. Nine-year-old Atiba Williams is testimony of this truism. Standing just over three feet tall, and weighing less than one hundred pounds, nine year old Atiba is a giant when it comes to his musical prowess.

An extraordinarily gifted child, Atiba, together with his sister Nubia, 21, have created history by

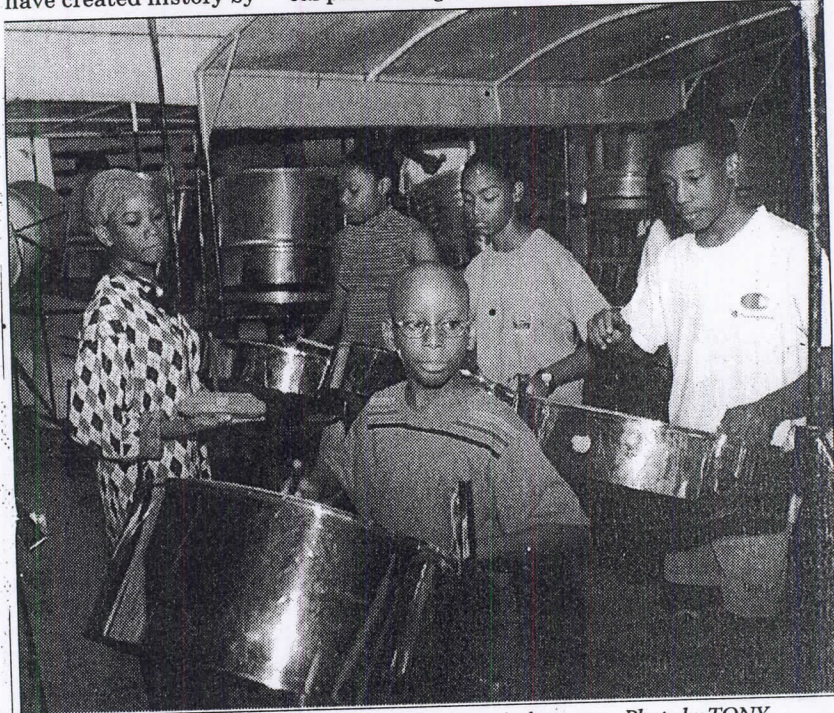
London, holds a Bachelor's degree in Musical Arts (Upper Second) and Grade eight, Music Theory.

She created some history by becoming the first student at the Faculty of Humanities and Education, to graduate as a Pan Major with regards to these qualifications.

Also, she is the only local pan arranger with a

that, she continued, "he would actually give me parts for the whole range of the band."

He would say let the tenors do this, let the double tenors do that. Other times I would have an idea and I would go to him with it and he would say whether he likes it or don't like it and we would exchange ideas and work along, I value his opinion, be-



ATIBA WILLIAMS...is a giant when it comes to musical prowess. Photo by TONY HOWELL.

becoming the youngest arrangers of a panorama tune.

The Williams siblings from Cocoyea Village, San Fernando, are arranging the Panorama tune, "Tenor Playe" by GS Soldier (Garth St. Clair) for Panasonic Connections of Victoria Village, San Fernando.

The players, the majority of whom are in the same age bracket as the Williams' do not resent them, but respect their ability. Atiba, especially is an inspiration to many, who hope to be just like him one day.

Creating history is not novel to the brother and sister team. Atiba, a grade 'A' student at Waterman's Preparatory School, sings, dances and writes poems. Although he is most renowned for his pan proficiency, he is an accomplished musician, with expertise in playing the violin, piano, drums and key board as well. He has a first grade in music, but his musical ability transcends even university level.

His sister Nubia, a graduate of the Univer-

specialist degree in pan. In an interview at the Pan Yard last week, Carlyle Fletcher, band Manager explained the connection with Panasonic and the Williams' siblings.

"When Pan Trinbago decided on the one arranger per band, we thought we needed to get an arranger, not just any arranger, but somebody who was musically trained. Nubia was recommended."

Knowing her ability as a player and her accomplishments as a musician, in spite of her age, Fletcher needed no convincing. He jumped at the idea.

"I suddenly became excited once more about Panorama.

That was two days before Christmas. So I found myself at her home bright and early on Christmas morning. I spoke to her and her family about it, and after some deliberations she agreed," Fletcher said.

It was a little difficult to sell it to the band, but he was able to convince the members they had a gold mine.

Nubia never arranged for any big conventional steelband although at UWI, she did pan arranging for different types of pan.

"We had steelband exams and everybody had to perform, you know like recitals, where we actually had to score arrangements. In addition, I taught the UWI Discovery Camp for four years to children in four age groups from 5-15 and I used to experiment on them. That was my first experience at arranging," Nubia remembered.

"I told myself, when I get out of school, I would bury myself in music, you know listen to different idioms and let my musical vocabulary grow. I did not think I was ready, but listening to the band now, listening to them perform the music that Atiba and I would give out, it builds my confidence more and more."

She was therefore pleasantly surprised by the confidence Fletcher had placed in her ability to arrange for his band.

Fletcher recalled, "when I spoke to Nubia, she said if she was going to do the tune, she would need Atiba's help. I was thinking it was just as a player.

But when I saw them work together, then I understood what she really meant. He is like an assistant arranger."

Nubia exploring Atiba's role in the arrangement explained, "he is not just an ordinary child.

He is gifted. He has perfect pitch and he has the ability to feel and to hear music in a way the normal average musician is not able to." Apart from

cause he hears music in his head."

Nubia went on to explain that Atiba's proficiency with the steelband came about, "because he grew up hearing the steelband, not because he could not play any other instruments.

It was the only available instrument we had in our family, that he could have developed on in a certain way and because he only has two hands."

Giving an insight into his musical mastery, Nubia who also manages Atiba said of him, "sometimes he would use four mallets or four sticks to play and that is the fullest range he could get.

And there are times, he would be hearing a whole orchestra but he isn't able to put it down.

He would dabble on the key boards and try to get the parts for ten fingers, but it's still kind of limited because he does not have the technical skills to perform the music he hears in his head."

Using this opportunity to arrange, she stated, has given him the outlet to vent that kind of musical prowess.

Speaking about the magnanimous task he has undertaken, the child prodigy said, "I feel very proud, because I had never arranged a steelband before.

It is a good opportunity, seeing that I can play different types of pan. I play the bass guitar, double seconds, tenor. I feel elated of the work Nubia and I have done all these weeks. It's sounding good already."

The well-spoken and highly disciplined young man gets to the panyard about 6 pm and does not leave before midnight most nights. Yet he is able to get up at 6 am next morning to get to school and start the routine all over again.

Nubia noted, "This is not very hard for him being involved in the arts from very young. This is not a job or an extra task, he loves what he is doing.

Sometimes I let him stay at home because I think he needs the rest, but even when I get back home from the panyard he is up reading or doing something. He has an energy that just keeps him going."

Fletcher, who has been with Panasonic for ten years, can't remember when last he felt this excited about Panorama.

"Our best year was with Ken 'Professor' Philmore in 1989 when we made it to the finals. Since then we have not been back to the finals, but listening to the band, I think this is definitely going to be one of the best years.

I am thinking panorama finals," he said confidently.