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Today

reviews & interviews



By TERRY JOSEPH

SOON ENOUGH, a large percentage of pan players will be reading their notes in order to learn even the Panorama tune.

No longer will a bunch of tired players be there night after night playing the same line over and over in the attempt to learn the phrase.

"It is the only way to go," says Pan Trinbago president Owen Serrette. "If we are saying that pan is a musical instrument, then its players should be musicians as defined and understood in international terms.

"They must be able to read and write music for other reasons too; so that they would be able to learn the music faster and thus improve the repertoire of each band, making them able to play for anyone, even calypsonians, just by putting up the music sheets in front of the instrument and playing the required notes and chords," he said.

"This will reduce the amount of *coasting* in the panyard and speed up the process of learning, allowing the band to put on more concerts in its panyard, both in and out of Carnival season, and return the mood of a panyard being a place for people to come and enjoy music."

THIS COASTING, as it is familiarly known, is at best a cacophonous routine, in which each member of a 150-player steel orchestra attempts to simultaneously master a different piece of the tune, resulting in a noise that only pannists can tolerate.

Much of the protest which comes from people who live near to panyards has its genesis in this aspect of the steelband's learning process.

But with the new thrust emerging, soon we will no longer have to live with this noisy difficulty, because those bands that have jumped to the front in the teaching of music to their players will reduce the need for this unstructured noise, improve their public relations and — by extension — the image of pan in the wider society.

The Courts Laventille Sounds Specialists (CLASS) of Eastern Quarry in Laventille, who two weeks ago started their teaching programme, is very serious about the new ini-

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PAN in a brand new key

tiative.

Band manager Richard Forteau says it has become mandatory for each player on the band's stage side to be literate in music.

"No longer can people like even myself come into the fold with a large knowledge of pan and feel that he or she may be a crackshot and must be accepted. The first requirement is that the person should be able to read music. All the dexterity and flam could come after that.

"It will help us, too, when it comes to competitions like the Steelband Music Festival, if several members of the band can read the scores rather than have to depend on one person to interpret the notes and teach everyone else," he said.

Ben Jackson, music teacher at Success Composite School, is preparing the band's members for their first grade exams this

November.

The Humming Birds Pan Groove of Fort George Road in St James also has a music programme in

place, although it is not mandatory that members be able to read their notes.

The band also has a music school registered with the Ministry of Education and insists that members learn not only pan but a second instrument, which will give them a wider appreciation of the music.

For years the Diego Martin Merrytones (of Bagatelle) has been running annual courses in music, using the pan as their teaching tool.

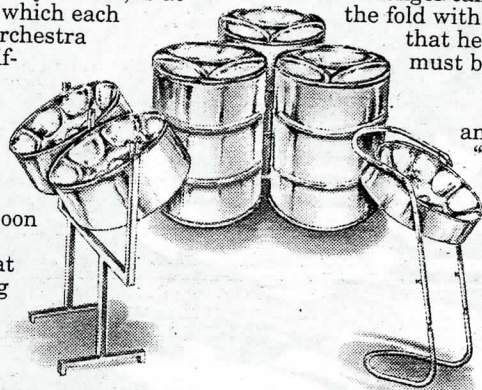
In addition, there are several schools which privately teach individuals to play pan using musical notations as the basis of learning the notes and simple songs.

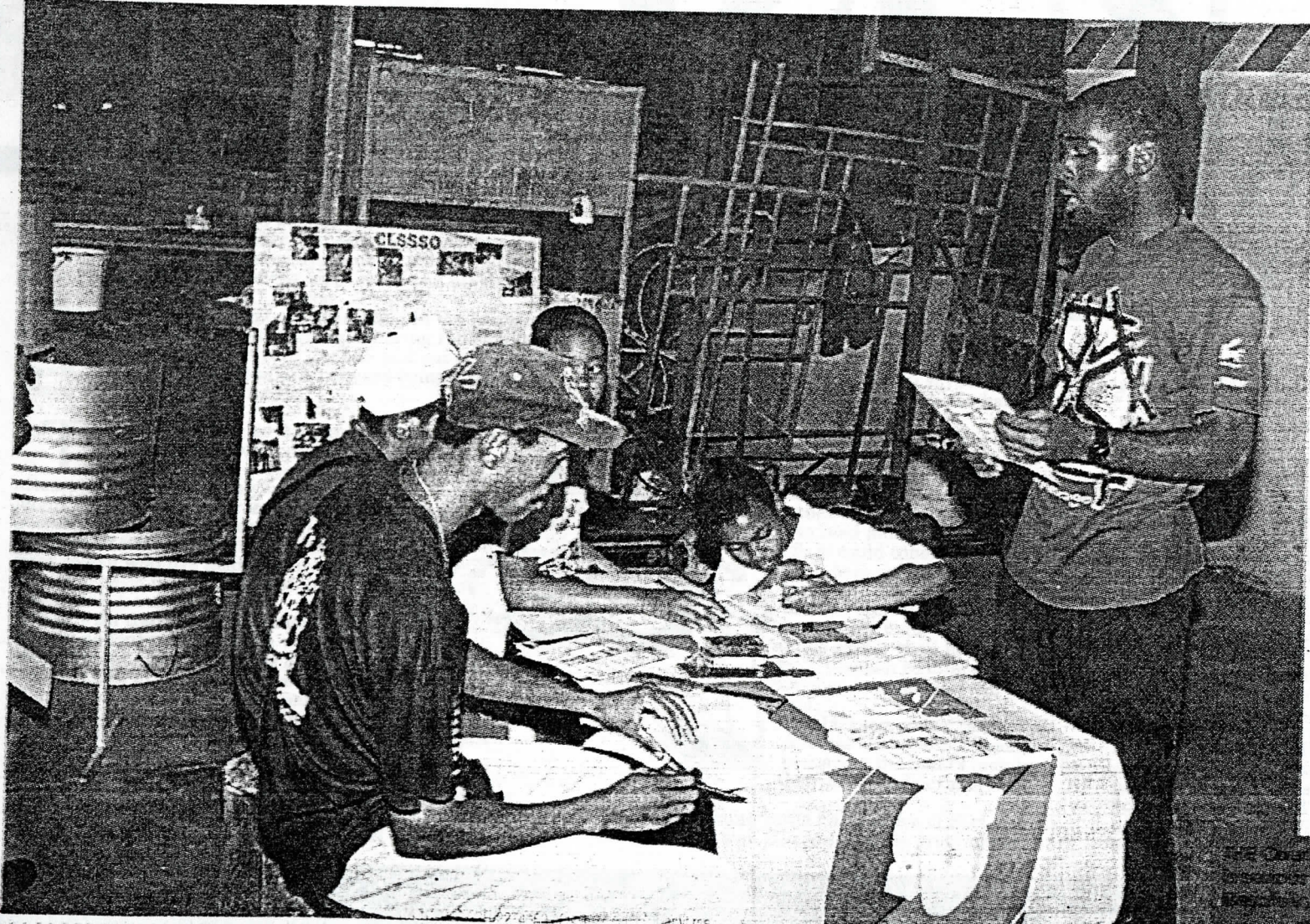
Legendary steelband leader and former Panorama judge Curtis Pierre is perhaps the most famous of those who run pan schools. Pierre's School, the Dixieland Pan Academy, is on Maraval Road in Port of Spain and among his students in the last two years have been people like Alvin Daniell and Diana Rhyner of Rhyner's Music.

Pierre, who led the steelband (Dixieland) that is perhaps singularly responsible for a broadening of the acceptance of pan and its players by the middle and upper classes, three years ago felt that there was enough of a body of people who wished to learn pan

but did not want to go to the panyard for that purpose, out of a fear of intimidation by younger persons who were already virtuosos.

He was right. As a consequence, the Curtis Pierre Pan





to go to the backyard for that purpose, out of a fear of intimidation by younger persons who were already virtuosos.

He was right. As a consequence, the Curtis Pierre Pan School has enjoyed the resulting patronage from persons who either just wanted to learn pan to enhance their knowledge of the subject or in order to join an ensemble or orchestra.

There's Parry's Pan School, Pan Pipers and a number of other music schools which have now begun to teach pan as the premier instrument for learning music.

Professor Cliff Alexis of the Northern Illinois University (the only university which offers a degree for pan music) said during a visit home last year that the pan was definitely the best teaching tool for music.

Richard Forteau, who is also secretary of Pan Trinidad, says that the opportunities are there. "Right now we have an offer call from the people at Disney, who want people to play pan for US \$500 per week, but the stipulation is that the players must read music.

"Pat Bishop's *Koanga* is also all set to tour, but the players are also required to read their notes," he said.

Serrette added that the myth that pannists can remember anything is nothing more than a myth indeed.

"If we had such great memo-