

Soloists finals in World Steelband Festival on tonight

By SEAN NERO

A FOREIGN-BASED local pannist topped competition at Thursday night's opening round of the World Steelband Music Festival (WSMF), at the St James Amphitheatre, St James.

Leon "Foster" Thomas, a member of BWIA Invaders Steel Orchestra and student at Florida Memorial College in the US state of Miami, led a field of 11 contestants in the soloists category going into tonight's final with a score of 274 points.

Appearing in position number 25 of 26 contestants that performed before the panel of adjudicators, Thomas played an own composition entitled "Me and the Storm—(Intro)." Following in second place was American Khuent Rose with a score of 263 points. He also played an original piece, which he composed called "Invention #1 in E Minor," while Alfred Harris, another US citizen

— whose mother is Trinidadian — gathered 261 points for his rendition of "Mystey," composed by Errol Garner. Like Thomas, Rose and Harris are also students at Florida Memorial College, and are tutored by Trinidadian Dr Dawn Batson.

Originally, eight pannists were to be selected by order of merit to advance to today's final; a recommendation by the judges. But a tie has brought another soloist into the fold.

Speaking to *Newsday* Richard Forteau, secretary of Pan Trinbago said: "The adjudicators cited the high standard of performances and recommended that ten, rather than eight soloists go into the finals of the soloists category. At the end of the night, there was a tie in tenth position. So now there are 11 finalists."

The tie in the tenth spot was between Rozelle-Anne Polydore who played "Etude III La Campanella" by Franz Liszt and Shiron Cooper doing Vivaldi's "Presto," both of whom amassed 248 points.

However, there was another tie. This occurred between Jason Peters and Marc Douglas each with 260 points. Both pannists played "Praeludium and Allegro" by Franz Liszt.

Judges on the night's programme were Joslynne Sealey, Esther Batson, Clive "Zanda" Alexander and Richard Pierre.

A comparatively large audience, attended the programme conceptualised by Pan Trinbago and managed by a management committee.

The show started one hour later than its advertised time of 7 pm, where patrons heard a variety of performances from a predominantly youthful cast whose offerings were well received during the four-hour presentation.

The decision by students of Florida Memorial College not to perform mainstream classical pieces, coupled with calypso items rendered by Andy Husbands of Exodus, who chose "Symphony In G" from the song book of the late Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts) and Sherwin Cooper's delivery of "Pan Talent" composed by the Mighty Terror (Fitzgerald Henry) injected a welcomed change of mood since the majority of contenders chose classical music from composers such as Chopin and Bach.

Cooper's choice found a special place in the hearts of all, since this year's WSMF in a tribute to the Mighty Terror. Three of Terror's songs have been chosen as test pieces for the ensemble, Single Pan Band and orchestra categories.

He executed this tune on guitar pan which was a major departure from the other frontline instruments (tenor, double seconds and double tenor) used. Husbands did well in this regard having played a set of six bass pans.

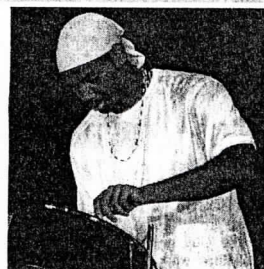
Defending champion Sophia Subero, who also hails from the Exodus camp came in seventh playing "Czardas." Other international soloists on the programme were Andy Akiho, West Columbia, Colgrain Whyte from Guyana and Manasseth Edwards from St Lucia.

SOLOISTS FINALS HOW THEY PLAY:

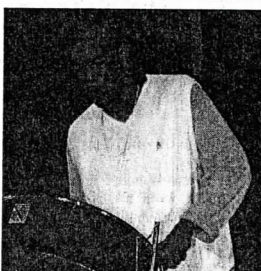
1. Alfred Harris	USA	Mystey	261
2. Marc Douglas	Trinidad	Praeludium and Allegro	260
3. Rozelle-Anne Polydore	Trinidad	Etude III La Campanella	248
4. Leon "Foster" Thomas	USA	Me and the Storm (Intro)	274
5. Shiron Cooper	Trinidad	Presto	248
6. Andy Akiho	USA	Macqueripe	259
7. Jason Peters	Trinidad	Praeludium and Allegro	260
8. Sophia Subero	Trinidad	Czardas	256
9. Shenelle Abraham	Trinidad	Sonata	251
10. Khuent Rose	USA	Invention #1 in E Minor	263
11. Mia Gormandy	Trinidad	Moto Perpetuo	250



LEON "FOSTER" THOMAS...finalist



KHUEUT ROSE...finalist



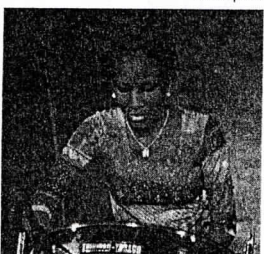
ALFRED HARRIS...finalist



SOPHIA SUBERO...defending champion



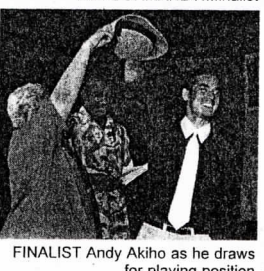
SHENELLE ABRAHAM...finalist



MIA GORMANDY...finalist



MARC DOUGLAS...finalist



FINALIST Andy Akiho as he draws for playing position
PHOTOS BY SEAN NERO