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Steelband festival

FRANZ SCHUBERT'S 'Marche Militaire' will soon be resounding at several points in the country not from the trumpets of marching soldiers but from the pans of steelband musicians.

This has been chosen as the test piece for Pan. Trinbago's Steelband Festival which begins on October 25 at Naparima Bowl.

It is not the first time that the competence of our steelband at classics will be tested. At the Bomb Competition on Carnival Monday and at the National Music Festivals listeners have been treated to the most difficult pieces of Beethoven and Bach.

To attain such levels of sophistication in music was not an easy task as the history of the steelband reveals. In its early days it was felt by many to be the haunt of the riff-raff of the society.

Despite its being socially unacceptable then, many young men embraced the opportunity that it provided for their ingenuity. However, many of them are alive today to witness its coming of age.

Now deeply indented into our cultural experience and with growing prestige beyond our borders, the steelband is aiming even higher.

With all its new prestige, it is attempting to guard against alienating itself from the very people from whom it came.

The Solo Harmonites has been engaged in activities in its community geared to making the youth there more responsible.

The Old Oak Casablanca shifted its Panyard Theatre to Moruga on Discovery Day as a mark of solidarity with villagers.

There have been, however, like in other pursuits, areas of obvious frustration. Some bands have alleged that they were exploited by mercenary promoters of block-o-rama fetes, some pan tuners withhold their services and talk of deaf panmen clouds the air.