

Steelbands in Toronto

music festival

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From KEN THOMAS
in Toronto

THE POPULAR Sunburst Steel Orchestra of St Catharine's, Ontario, the Canadian city which is twinned with Port of Spain, is among 14 steelbands taking part in this year's Kiwanis Music Festival in Toronto.

They are all vying for the top prize in a special steelband section and the main contest is being held this month at Westview Centennial Secondary School.

According to a release from the Kiwanis Club, the following Canadian-based steelbands have registered for the competition: Dewson Stars, Daystorm Drummers, Yorkwoods Rockers, Firegrove Symphony, Topcliff Steelers, Vanier Steelband, Westview Centennial Senior Secondary, Jane Junior High School, Westview Pan Groove, Westview Pantario, Lewis St Beattie Senior Secondary, York Lions Steelband, and Sunburst.

This is the 41st year of the

Kiwanis Festival, in which young people from all over Canada and a few participants from overseas are judged on their talent in the various spheres of music.

It is the second year that steelband music is being included. The adjudicator in this special class is Dr Harry S Haughton, who is a school teacher in Mississauga, just west of here.

He says the inclusion of steelband music in the festival is tantamount to an acknowledgement of the art form.

"It is good that the mainstream culture is beginning to recognize the viability of this kind of music," he told the local media. And Laurel Robinson, administrator of the festival, said that due to last year's high standard, steelbands may well be given Kiwanis scholarships.

Trinidadians should take a bow because the steelband section is one of the highlights of this Ca-

nadian music festival. Eight locations across Metropolitan Toronto will be used for the various competitions, which will involve more than 30,000 Ontario performers, five years old and over.

In the steelband section, there is at least one all-girls steel orchestra, York Lions.

There are nearly 20 categories in the music festival, for both solo and group performers, and about \$25,000 (Can.) in scholarship money to be awarded.

"Our function here is to provide practical experience for performers," Ms Robinson stated, adding: "We try to present a platform for them and hope they become more active and more informed about performing." Most of the performers have been studying music in their own schools, but some have received private tutoring.

Besides the scholarships, performers will receive a wide assortment of personal and school trophies.