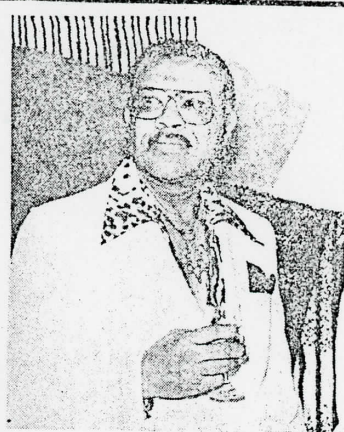




KEN GORDON



ALLAN CLOVIS



AUBREY ADAMS

Who will finally

STRONG DISAGREEMENT must be expressed publicly with three recent journalistic statements implying that the steelband is not fit to play European classical music.

The first statement was made in the form of a commentary on Radio Trinidad by Jeremy Taylor shortly after the International Steelband Festival last November.

The second statement, again by Mr. Taylor, was made in a newspaper column published in the Trinidadian Guardian.

The third statement was made, again in the Guardian, by another columnist, Morgan Job.

Part One

To deal with cast commentary first: Mr. Taylor's broad-

its general thrust was

that "special music" should be composed for the steel orchestra because, when it plays European classical music overseas, it is listened to only as a kind of novelty, not as a serious musical statement.

Mr. Taylor added that the same thing would happen if an Anglo-American Symphony Orchestra tried to play our own music - calypso.

He made the parallel comparisons obviously to indicate quite clearly that he was not attributing inferior musical skills to Trinidadian pannists, and superior skills to Anglo-American musicians.

I am inclined to take him on his word because I am a little familiar with his writing as a drama critic and book reviewer; although I will be questioning what I perceive as an erroneous thread of cultural perception in his thinking.

A few days later,

Mr. Taylor, recycling the same article - this is an occupational hazard when you work in both radio and newspaper journalism - wrote on substantially the same topic in the Guardian: although, to be fair to him, he developed several other points related to the whole subject of the international progress of the modern steelband.

This is what he had to say: "Another (problem) is the question of what steel orchestras should really be playing. Every musical instrument has music written for it - has to have music written for it, and cannot develop very far without it."

He also wrote: "Classics on pan will always arouse interest - but interest in a curiosity, a novelty ('hey, fancy that, look what these lil' ol oil drums can do, Mavis')."

"If the London Symphony Orchestra started giving Calypso

programmes, that would be quite a curiosity too; but anyone who really knew Calypso would always prefer the real thing. And it is so with classics on pan, like it or not."

The tone of Mr. Taylor's two articles was never deliberately disparaging of steelband music: in fact, he was quite supportive and enthusiastic about the whole idea of pan on the international music scene.

Strong disagreement, however, must be expressed with his equations of classical music exclusively with Anglo-American Symphony orchestras, and calypso music exclusively with steelband orchestras; this is a very dangerously limited view.

Before analysing the specific points of musical aesthetics involved in Mr. Taylor's argument, it is necessary to step

back, and to take a larger over-view of the whole modern steelband movement.

Pan has today become political because of its inherent musical ingenuity, and the impressive progress it has made over the past fifty years.

Pan is no longer an outlawed, déclassé Afro-Trinidadian instrument heard in the ghetto areas of British colonial Trinidad.

Pan is today a new, evolving, exciting, versatile, sophisticated modern musical instrument, playing music scored on sheets; large, gleaming, beautifully sculptured orchestras with elegant tuxedo-clad musicians; with repertoires representing Afro-Caribbean, Spanish, French, Afro-American, European classical, Jazz, European folk, Blues, Rock, Funk, Military, Gospel, light popular, ballet and opera forms.

A steel orchestra



FEMALE dancer from Ambakaila wining on the docks for a White male tourist