

Invaders to play 'Warsaw Concerto'

By SEAN NERO

SEeking to capture its first ever major steelband competition victory, Petrotrin Invaders Steel Orchestra will play their version of Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*. This will be one of the two musical pieces that will be performed by the band on Saturday at the grand finals of Pan Is Beautiful Too, Edition VII of the Steelband Music Festival series, at the Jean Pierre Complex.

The Woodbrook-based orchestra, one of the oldest steelbands in existence today, will play in position number eight. Invaders is among eight other conventional orchestras vying for top accolades at the biggest social steelband event of the

Herbert added: "Our closest taste of victory came in 1967, when the band played Lord Melody's *Sparrow Pay*. The band was named Panorama champ of that year and five minutes later it was relegated to second position, in preference to Guinness Cavaliers."

On that occasion, Invaders had actually won the Best Dressed Steelband award, while Cavaliers captured the Panorama title.

"Our recent achievement as a recipient of the Chaconia Medal (Gold) has instilled a drive among the membership to claim victory at Pan Is Beautiful VIII."

Invaders' resident tuner Vernon "Birdie" Mannette has "thrown in the towel," ending almost 40 years of involvement in pan tun-

Groove, WITCO Desperadoes (three-time festival champion), and Tropical Angel Harps," said Herbert, "only a few of the steelbands who have opted not to perform in this year's event have had a negative impact on this year's competition."

This he said does not mean that steel orchestras, such as Solo Pan Knights and All Stars, are not capable opponents.

"It is regrettable that steelbands have decided to stay on the side-line."

Although the competition is easier, Herbert added: "I, like many, prefer to have those local bands that chose to be on the side-line participate."

Herbert thinks it is time for Pan Trinbago to intervene and identify what is deterring these notable ensembles from participating in a competition that is as prestigious as the biennial Festival. He also feels the Festival needs to be restructured, beginning with the omission of the test piece, which some believe becomes monotonous as the Festival progresses.

The Festival needs to be properly marketed, said Herbert, adding: "When advertising begins two-weeks before the actual event, it highlights the central executive's inability to sell the Pan Is Beautiful

competition."

Herbert believes the \$40 (US\$7) general admission charged for the finals is a "steal of a deal," to hear eight of the best steelbands in the world perform.

He emphasised the need to have foreign steel orchestras, like the Swiss National Steelband, participate in the Festival. Herbert disagrees with sentiments echoed by some that the

outside world is stealing one of our national treasures.

Herbert explains: "When more people outside of Trinidad and Tobago experience this national musical trea-

sure, it will provide us with free international advertising.

"We should be honoured that a steelband from Europe would aspire to come all the way from Switzerland,

to the mecca of pan, and learn from us; to experience the true origin of the pan.

"Being afraid of international competition is the least of our concerns.

"It would be like a football team going into Brazil, to defeat them on their home ground which is most unlikely. Most of the time they will get a lesson in football."

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According to the band's newly re-elected manager Ricardo Herbert, Invaders entered this year's event with an aggregation of 60 players, under renowned musician/ conductor Fitzgerald Jerry Jemmott and resident arranger Nervyn Saunders.

Invaders will perform Steve Sealey's "Break Away," one of the top Road March contenders for Carnival 1996, as its Calypso of Choice.

At the qualifying rounds last, Invaders placed third with a total 766 points.

Under the breadfruit tree at the Invaders Panyard on Tragarete Road, the band continues its nightly 7 pm Music Festival rehearsals, which often run well into the morning period.

"Though our focus is to be victorious, winning is not all," said Herbert. "Participating is.

"Although the band has faced many types of disappointments over its long competition history, Invaders continues to excel, only to become stronger."

ing, which has shaped most of his life. Invaders has selected pan tuners/makers Bertram Kellman and Patrick Worrell to fill Mannette's shoes.

Herbert explained that Invaders' resident classical arranger Anthony Prospect is currently seeking medical treatment in Miami, Florida. Jemmott, who is a long-standing pan conductor, critically acclaimed for his no-nonsense approach with defending Festival champion Neal and Massy Trinidad All Stars, has adapted well to yet another bunch of young, disciplined, enthusiastic and determined pan-nists.

Herbert however laments the rapid decline in participation by steel orchestras in recent festivals, especially at this year's event.

He's aghast at what he views as "skeleton participation," in a competition held in the mecca of the steelband, where some 300-plus steelbands reside.

"Without steelbands, like Phase II Pan