

Pan Trinbago's 'godmother' passes on

CHARLES KONG SOO

In the lead-up to Carnival, the musical fraternity lost one of its pioneers with the death of Marjorie Wooding, who passed on January 22 in Orlando, USA.

Special homage was paid to the woman who gave Pan Trinbago its name with the observance of one minute of silence at the Panorama 2013 final. Wooding also received an award for distinguished service from the organisation last year.

Also honoured at Panorama 2013 were pan icon Bertie Marshall and Tony Lewis from Renegades.

Speaking to the T&T Guardian in a telephone interview yesterday, Keith Diaz, president of Pan Trinbago described Wooding as "the godmother" of the organisation.

Diaz said Wooding made an "outstanding contribution in the early years of pan, what we call the golden era of pan, in the 60s and 70s, in adjudicating over steelbands and Panorama.

"She also got involved even further when we were searching for a name in the early years, from the Steelbands Mens' Association of T&T, to the Steelbands Mens' Association of T&T and Entertainers to the Steelband Improvement Committee, all forerunners of Pan Trinbago.

"As we were coming together with T&T to include in our name, it was Marjorie who came up with incorporating 'pan' with 'Trin' and 'bago' to include everyone."

Regarded as a cultural pioneer, Wooding was a judge at San Fernando Carnival, Parade of the Bands from the 1950's through to the 1980s and the Prime Minister's Best Village competition 1960s to the 1980s across T&T. She also adjudicated Parang and Panorama.

Wooding had a distinguished career as an educator and musician and was one of the early contributors to the development of the steelband movement in T&T. She was the first female arranger for Panorama, interpreting



Marjorie Wooding

Lord Kitchener's "Wait Teacher" for the San Fernando based Silver Tones Steel Orchestra in 1971.

She also pioneered the use of the instrument in church. Over the years, she taught several pan enthusiasts to read and write music.

Wooding founded the Sando Organettes Steel Orchestra in 1969.

In an interview last year she recounted those early days: "We had many challenges, not from the members, but from rival bands stationed around us. We put up a tent with the permission of the land tenants, on a small portion of land, on Coffee Street. It was broken down amidst the jeers and hurrahs of rival band members. Undauntedly, I approached National Housing Head Office for permission to use the said land. We rebuilt and continued."

Well loved among the steelband

fraternity, Wooding was an active member of Pan Trinbago. In fact, she gave the fledgling group its name in 1976. In 2011, she received a special award from Pan Trinbago for her contribution to the development of the movement over the years.

A devoted Anglican, her musical talent carried into her pioneering work in the Anglican diocese. Having begun learning to play the piano at tender age of three years, she was appointed Organist at St Paul's Anglican Church in San Fernando at the age of 13. There she served as organist and music director from the 1950s until 1970, before moving to St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Pleasantville in the 1970s and St Clements Anglican Church in St Clements Village from the late 1970s into the early 1980s.


She was commissioned by the Anglican Bishop to compose a revised version of the music for the Eucharistic Mass in the new Anglican Liturgy. Her work, now familiarly referred to as The Wooding Mass, is still used in churches to this day.

After her retirement, she migrated to Canada. There, she unfurled the T&T cultural flag, continuing her work in the church and imparting her vast musical knowledge and experience to a new generation of students.

In her own words, "These experiences added flavour to my life, strengthened my faith and cemented my love for culture and for people."

Born in 1923, Wooding was survived by her three siblings, five children, six grandchildren and seven great-grand-children.

Her funeral took place in the USA last month. She was 89.



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