

Call for steelband body in Caribbean

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steelband

A Grenadian who won a scholarship to Trinidad to learn to tune "pan" has called for the establishment of a Caribbean Steelband Association.

Wilfred Harris, 40, of St. George's Grenada believes that with such an organisation panmen throughout the Caribbean could meet and map out plans to develop the steelband to "even greater heights."

The steelband, he noted, was gaining international stature and was being used by top recording stars and entertainers such as "The Rolling Stones," "Barbra Streisand," and "Neil Diamond."

Standardisation of pan was something "urgently" needed, he felt. And this, in Harris' opinion, could be brought closer to reality with a Caribbean Association

He says: "If all tuners could get together and standardise instruments just as in the case of the piano we would really have something. Pan should be standardised so that if you go to any part of the world you would be able to play a pan, as you can do with any other accepted musical instrument."

Harris who is the national pan tuner of Grenada came to Trinidad in 1971 on a Government scholarship for a course on pan tuning with Bertie Marshall, then captain of Hilanders Steel Orchestra.

Harris who works with the Grenada Ministry of Labour Youth Development and Sport returned to Trinidad recently to visit his ailing father.

He says of this three-month tenureship with Marshall: "Bertie did a good job and has helped carry the steelband a long

way in Grenada. I have an assistant now and we are training other Grenadians to be tuners."

He added: "We have definitely made an impact and are tuning pans for at least 20 bands at present."



FLASHBACK: HARRIS (RIGHT) DURING THE ONE OF HIS TRAINING LESSONS WITH MARSHALL