

Some pointers to ensure that pan stays beautiful

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OPEN letter to Arnim Smith President of Pan Trinidad.

While the tumult and the shouting still rage, it is important to shed some light and draw attention to the fact that all the evidence required to arrive at a just assessment of the performance of Catelli Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra resides in the recorded version of the test piece "Fire and Steel-Ode to Yo Yo" on the night of the finals, October 4, 1986.

If these tapes are played back and compared with the official score, it can easily be established which band performed the work with the greatest fidelity to the score, particularly in relation to the parts for snare drum, cymbals and bass drum. Specific instructions were given concerning the drum parts.

It is not a question of crying 'sour grapes,' but of seeking to focus on one important aspect of performances — the faithful execution of a given score — i.e. playing what is written. No more needs to be said.

I feel that it is in the interest of the Pan Festival for consideration to be given to the following areas:-

Important Elements

1. **ADJUDICATION:** Pan Trinidad, as organisers of the Pan Festival, have the responsibility for providing the judges they employ with unequivocal guidelines for adjudication, to ensure uniformity of approach to marking in the interest of fair play towards the competitors.

For example, why are no specifics included on the mark sheet under the headings "Rhythm — 20 Marks" or "Interpretation and General Effect — 50 marks?"

To ignore important elements of rhythm such as steadiness, spirit and variety is to fail to point the importance of these constituents to the judges, and thus to deprive contestants of the opportunity to gain marks for observing elements of the rhythmic texture of the work performed.

In addition, to omit specifics from the headings Interpretation and General Effect, even by failing to allocate points under each of the headings (say Interpretation 40 points, General effect 10 points) is for the organisers to abdicate their responsibility to competitors, and to expose their performances, without direction, to the subjective judgment of the adjudicators to the extent of half of the available marks.

Types Of Works

Far be it from me to impugn either the competence or the integrity of the judges of any Festival, but I feel most strongly that serious competitors deserve no less than to be assured of intelligent and informed adjudication based on acceptable criteria.

There is a sufficient number of competent musicians available in the country to provide Pan Trinidad



ARNIM SMITH

with advice on criteria for assessing Rhythm, Interpretation and General Effect. These musicians ought to be consulted on the matter.

2. **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FESTIVAL.** It would seem desirable to reassess the rationale for the types of works comprising Festival music, especially in view of the criticism from some quarters about the amount of 'classics' played. For instance:

(a) **CALYPSO.** No one would argue that calypso should be eliminated as one of the offerings, for reasons which are well known and too numerous to be stated here.

Suffice it to say that the traditionally close association between pan and calypso makes it including essential.

A Showcase

(b) **TUNE OF CHOICE.** The inclusion of this offering is necessary to provide stimulus to all competitors to exercise and extend their musicianship, and to enable competitors to select a work in which they feel they can excel — a showcase for their skill.

(c) **TEST PIECE.** If there is to be a Test Piece at all, then it could well create a long-awaited opportunity for Pan Trinidad to commission works in the 'Caribbean' musical idiom scored expressly for pan.

Over time, such commissions would contribute to repertoire of Festival music specifically composed for pan, and thus satisfy a significant need in the country which claims to be the 'home' of the steelband, but somehow neglects to take the action required to establish and maintain its claim.

All that competitors require of the test piece is that accurate copies of the official score be made available to them, and we have the technology in Trinidad and Tobago to produce printed copies of the musical score.

A Caribbean-style test piece would also be an answer to the public's criticism of the predominance of classical music in the Festivals.

I trust that the above comments will be taken in the spirit in which they are intended, namely as my contribution to ensuring that "Pan is Beautiful."

FITZGERALD JEMMOTT, Musician.