

ML 1040



The members of Musical Gems Steelband Ensemble are, from left: ANTHONY BARRINGTON, KENNETH WILLIAMS, TIFFANY ST JOHN, GEORGE KING, IAN CLARKE, VONRICK MAYNARD, BRIAN SMART, CECILIA LE MITRE.



Musical Gems Steelband Ensemble's tenor pan player MIKHAIL SALCEDO.

MUSICAL GEMS

Latest steelband ensemble

AVALENE HARRIS

WITH the launch of Musical Gems Steelband Ensemble, Brian Smart hopes to revamp the once active Paragon Sports and Cultural Club and by extension encourage more young people to become involved in the arts.

Smart of Petit Bourg, along with George King are the band's co-founders. They both were instrumental in forming the ten member steel orchestra five months ago.

Smart said the inclusion of the Cocorite based band within the community would act as a catalyst for young people.

"There is a fair amount of crime and violence taking place in Cocorite and we want to give the young people something to appreciate," he said during an interview at the Guardian on November 6.

He said the members of the band originated from the Fifth Dimension Steel Orchestra, Belmont.

Smart who has been playing pan for the past 30 years said the aim of the launch was to introduce the band to the public and also help to revive the sports club.

"We want to re-vamp the Paragon Sports and Cultural Club

because it had been one of the longest standing clubs in the area," he said.

On November 3, the steelband ensemble hosted its first free concert to the public at the Paragon Sports and Cultural Club, Foreshore Lands in Cocorite.

"Paragon was once a top sports and cultural club in the '60s and '70s but over the years it had been dismantled.

"The sports club offer many sporting disciplines for the young people and we want to assist Paragon in attracting the attention of the youths."

The teacher of Success Laven-tille Composite School, who also plays with Pandamonium and Amboys Steel Orchestra, said he was thankful to the management of the sports club who presented the band to the public.

"We are working alongside with the sports club to reintroduce new members to the club.

"By hosting the concerts was just one of the ways of attracting the young people to the music art-form," he added.

He said at the concert, the band received overwhelming responses from members of the public.

Smart said Keith Salcedo who is

the musical director of the band is also responsible for the band's arrangements.

Salcedo is also the band's resident singer.

"Keith adds that musical ingenuity to the band with his musical talents," Smart added.

Full of confidence

Smart said despite having to borrow steel pans to practise and perform they were bent on giving their best performance at every event.

"From the responses that we received from the launch, we are confident that we would be invited to perform at upcoming events.

"We want to bring something new to the public, hence the name Musical Gems.

"There is something very special and unique about this steel orchestra," he added.

Smart said the band which is very small in number would remain that size as they are concentrating on recruiting younger people when the veteran players 'resign'.

"Very soon I would be resigning from the band to make way for more younger and vibrant blood,"

he said with a smile.

He added that for the Christmas season, the band has already been billed to perform at the malls and social events.

Where funding and sponsorship was concerned Smart said at present they were seeking the assistance from corporate sponsors and the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs to assist them in the purchase of their own pans.

"We are in need of our own instruments, very soon Panarama would be upon us and we would have to give back the instruments that we borrowed," he said.

The band's shortcoming have in no way deterred Smart, in fact he sees the band going as far as international sharing the good music to the globe.

"Expect to hear more from this band, we are going to surprise a lot of people," he ended.



KEITH SALCEDO, Musical Gems Steelband Ensemble music director in song, accompanied by the band.