

have an audience of
405,000 on Sundays
and 262,000 on weekdays

370

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SECTION B: FEATURES SPORTS

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by Our Man in New York

THE steel drum orchestra, the musical innovation of the 20th century, I unreservedly forecast, shall become the music of the 21st century. And come August, the week of the 24th shall be called "Trinidad and Tobago's Week in New York."

The music of the 21st century? The hypocritical will say "arrant nonsense," but to the professional artiste it is a non-arguable fact. Steel-band music is here to stay and is becoming better every day.

The present leading exponents of the art-form, West Indian Tobacco Company Despers, brought this to the fore when they completely enthralled the people of New York with their recent concert performances.

Despers' historic musical presentation began with what I choose to call "Come, Hear and See us in Concert" at Carnegie Hall on the evening of May 27, to which only VIPs were invited.

Hollywood Fame

Among the prominent artistes who took part were singer Liza Minelli, Skitch Henderson and the Pops, his new band. Skitch also conducted Despers at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on May 30, after being asked by Pat Bishop, the band's official conductor.

To the surprise and pride of many West Indians who attended, after Despers' performance at Carnegie, many in the audience began leaving the Hall not realising that there was more entertainment to come.

Many personalities of the theatrical world, of both Broadway and Hollywood fame, were invited. And quite a few voiced their doubt at the steel band being able to play the classics.

But those who expected their negative criticisms would be justified were dumbfounded when Despers played "Flight Of the Bumble Bee." There was a thunderous sustained standing ovation.

It so happened that those who expected to laugh and jeer asked, nay begged, for more. So impressed was City Mayor Ed Koch, he told Terrance Joseph, the President of the Trinidad and Tobago Alliance, that the week of August 24 shall be named Trinidad and

Delightful Despers!

Laventille's panmen conquer the Big Apple



PAT BISHOP conducts Witco Desperadoes at the Apollo Theatre

Tobago Week in New York.

It can justly be said that what all the experienced politicians and learned career diplomats failed to do for Trinidad and Tobago in 24 years, Despers did in one week with four concerts.

Typically Trinidadian, the show of appreciation by Despers, was tangible and practical.

The following day there was a concert for the people of New York in front of City Hall, the Mayor's Office in downtown Manhattan.

This, though held between 11.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. was fete Trinidad and Tobago style. About a thousand workers and employers alike gathered, swayed, tapped their feet to the steel-band's rendition of the calypsoes and classics.

It reminded me of the pre-Carnival

concerts in Trinidad's famed Woodford Square in Port-of-Spain.

However, the City Hall concert was the last of the "freeness." The following two days May 29 and 30, New Yorkers were called on to pay to hear Despers; they warmly responded.

Venues — the internationally famous Apollo Theatre, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Samaroo Jets

Both houses were completely sold out. Not even the Tyson - Thomas heavyweight fight, the night of the Apollo concert, offered any competition.

The proceeds have reportedly gone to two charities, The Benefit of Associated Black Charities and the Caribbean Education and Cultural Institute.

The sponsors — Coco Cola Bottling Company of New York, American Tele-

phone and Telegraph, EWU, The Daily News, Carib News and the Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board came in for heavy praise, with the result that I was told by John Campi of the Daily News that negotiations had been made for the Samaroo Jets to come up here next few months.

One of the names which astill of the lips of people in the entertainment world of this large metropolis — the home of a variety of cultures — is Grammy Award winner, band-leader Ralph Mc Donald, an American by birth but of Trinidad parents. He still has folks in Santa Cruz.

Ralph ably assisted in bringing Despers to NY, using his own personal funds to do so.

Then the elegant, charming, witty Ms Joan Massiah and the Parliamentary Representative of P.O.S. South, Attorney Theodore Gerra, these two, with the amiable and accomplished Pat Bishop made a lasting impression.



IN FRONT of City Hall after the free concert, from left: Terrance Joseph, President of TT Alliance; Babooram Rambissoon, TT Consul General; Pat Bishop; Robert Greenidge, Despers manager; Theodore Guerra; Joan Massiah; Eutrice Hope, Manager of TT Tourist Board and Joe Barriteau.