

Spotlight

Teague: Music literacy no must for pannists

By TERRY JOSEPH

AS DEBATE continues about the value of music literacy to pannists, virtuoso Liam Teague, the holder of a Master's Degree in music, says that the ability to read notes does not necessarily make you a better player.

Teague, only the second musician to ever receive the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Outstanding Young Alumni award, earned his bachelor and master degrees in music from NIU in 1997 and 1999. He has performed for Prince Edward of Great Britain and Venezuela's former President Carlos Andres Perez.

Teague recently released his fourth compact disc, titled *T&T* (with saxophonist Arturo Tappin). He is just back from a stint in Italy for the Angostura Group of Companies and left again on Friday to play at Grenada's Spice Jazz Festival, alongside some of the most famous names in the international music industry.

Because of his hectic schedule, he was unable to personally collect the NIU award, which is given annually to the alumnus who has demonstrated great promise and success in his professional career. A recognition luncheon, scheduled for yesterday at NIU's Duke Ellington Ballroom was to be attended by his father, who was slated to receive the honour on Liam's behalf.

Speaking on Thursday to the *Express*, Teague said that perhaps too much is being made of the need for pannists to become musically literate.

"What it does is allow you to appreciate what you are playing in quite a different

way and literacy helps in reducing the time taken to master a piece. By taking less time to complete each work, it also helps to increase your overall earning potential," Teague said.

"But one of my musical heroes of all time is still Len 'Boogie' Sharpe, who is not musically literate," he said. "If you are thinking about the business end of music, it definitely cannot hurt. In fact, music literacy has done wonders for my career, because a conductor can send me a score today and by next week I can appear with his symphony."

He should know. Teague has performed with the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Peoria Symphony, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, the Belle Vue Philharmonic and the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra. After his Grenada gig, he returns home for two weeks, before leaving for California and Wisconsin, where he will conduct summer music camp.

"But there are musicians who cannot read a line that are doing equally well and some are doing much better," Teague said. "There are business angles like marketing and management to consider when you are looking at the difference in earnings between those who are musically illiterate and the certified musicians. Its not just a straight case of the one that can read having better pay days.

"In fact, I want to compliment the Creative Arts Centre at the University of the West Indies for introducing the degree programme and using pan as a teaching instrument," Teague said. "That can only help, but I would not like talented players to feel that because they

are not certified, they should throw away their sticks.

"Frankly, I have been in music programmes since 1992 and that is a long time. I do not plan to go on to doctorate level because that programme is not offered at NIU and I will have to do ethnomusicology, which is intensive work. I feel that it is high time I started earning some money instead.

"I work near to profes-

sional musicians on the classical circuit who receive up to US\$20,000 for a night's work and I do not see why the earnings of a pannist of equal talent should be any less," he said. "That is the level I am looking at. What is possible for the violin is equally possible for pan."

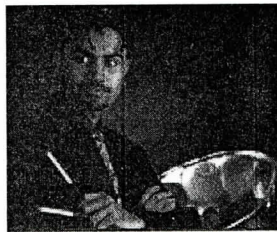
Teague will next be seen here in a big-band setting, when he performs with the NIU Steelband at the World Steelband

Music Festival in October.

"I no longer have a pan affiliation here," he said. "The band I played for no longer exists."

Every one of the NIU Steelband's 35 members is musically literate.

The band will be playing a calypso specially composed by another Trinidadian, Cliff Alexis, who is the band's co-director. Their classical choice is still a closely guarded secret.



LIAM TEAGUE