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*see Steelband*

# Pan dances

# to greater heights

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*GN 1632T8*

*2. Dance - T & T Express 88-05-13 p. 24*

BY DEBORAH JOHN

# Review of Music and Dance

IT WAS disappointing that more people did not attend *Music And The Dance* Noble Douglas Dance Company's 1988 presentation, with Phase II Pan Groove, which was held at Queen's Hall from May 6-8.

But for those who did not go, that was strictly their loss. They missed the unique experience of seeing a local dance company perform with a steelband as the orchestra. And in this instance it was not merely a steelband and a dance company getting together — it was a meeting of the very accomplished in

their respective disciplines. Phase II Pan Groove is the champion steelband for 1988, and Noble's company has some of the better dancers in the business.

The coming together of the steelband and the company has long been a dream of Noble's, and as a first time experience it was one in which many valuable lessons must have been learnt.

Noble might have discovered that it doesn't work so well to have the

pan and the dancers onstage together. During a piece like *Quick Sharpe*, choreographed by Heather Henderson-Gordon and Allan Balfour, with both players and dancers wearing black, and the pans gleaming it was difficult. If you were trying to concentrate on the dance you would have had a problem.

If, however you were

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# Pan music dancing on

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concentrating on the incredibly quick fingers of Selwyn Mini Eyes Springer, as he did Boogsie Sharpe's intricate, difficult *Quick Sharpe*, the dance then took on a surreal aspect as if these figures had been conjured by the deliberate notes. Enough cannot be said however about Springer's intellectual rendering of *Quick Sharpe* which is Boogsie at his brilliant best, and if there is ever a tenor pan shootout, then this

must be the test piece. Boogsie is on tour in Europe, but he would have been pleased with Springer's interpretation:

*Passage* choreographed by Noble Douglas worked better with the pans onstage because of the colours worn by both the dancers and the pannists. The music for this piece was Micheal 'Toby' Tobas' *Tassa*, and should be familiar to jazz lovers on the local scene. As the name implies, the music, a unique mixture of percussion and pan, is East Indian in influence.

The costumes designed by Merrill Mahabir, in bright greens and pinks, also reflected this influence. The pinks against the background of the pannists' bright green jackets brought the dancers into better focus so that the delicate yet vigorous flowing movements stood out.

Phase II pannists seemed to be nervous on Friday which was opening night. They never did quite master the flow of the music for the softer pitch at which they were required to play.

This meant that well

established numbers in the Phase II repertoire like *Waves* went awry. The way Phase II played it, if the first half of the song was being played on J'ouvert morning then everyone would have been out of breath just trying to catch up. Auburn Wiltshire managed to even the pace coming on about midway through this number with his saxophone.

The Phase also did their North zonal prize winning tunes, 1986 and 1987 consecutively, *Pan Rising* and *This Feeling Nice*, but even here some

*joie de vivre* was absent. However, the band got as near to perfect as it possibly could, with Boogsie's Pan Festival classical composition *Dance Of The Douens*, innovatively conducted by Wiltshire.

There may have been first night jitters, but it wasn't evident in the dance. This is an extremely well rehearsed company, so that even when, at the end of the night, there came some faint conviction that movements had been somewhat repetitive, there remained that precision.



and and the complete grace which characterised works like *Ebb and Flow*, *Red Clay*, *Trying Times*.

Noble can take a well

deserved bow, and so can the entire company. And for encores Errol Fahey, Andre George, Christel De Souza, and Heather Henderson-Gordon.