

# Pan prodigy needs monetary assistance for music studies

WESLEY GIBBINGS

**Twenty-three year old Aviel Scanterbury is considered by some to be a musical prodigy with a string of credentials that belie his young age.**

A graduate of the music programme at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Scanterbury's skills as a pan player are impressively matched by his accomplishments as a steelband arranger and important work in collaboration with musicians covering a wide variety of musical instruments and genres.

In a few weeks, at the end of a so-far bumpy financial road, Scanterbury leaves these shores in pursuit of a Master's Degree in Jazz Studies from the George Mason University in Virginia, USA.

Last Panorama season, he took Arima Angel Harps to the semifinals of the 2017 Panorama competition in the medium band category, as one of the youngest arrangers in the mix.

The band played Voice's *Far from Finished* as a virtual statement on the young arranger's ambitions in the field of music.

Last Saturday, the band hosted Supporting Excellence in support of Scanterbury's fund-raising drive to make the move to George Mason.

Stage-side bands such as Suave Steel, LH Pan Academy and Betaudier Pan Academy joined with Adan Hagley and Band and calypsonian Chucky to deliver a delightful evening of music in the open-air setting of the Angel Harps panyard along the Eastern Main Road.

Yet, despite the proceeds of the concert together with \$50,000 from government's Sport and Culture Fund and other smaller fund-raising projects the young musician remains considerably short of the \$600,000 bill he will face for the two-year programme.

T&T Guardian interviewed Scanterbury on his vision for pan music in the coming years and the role he sees himself playing.

"At the end of the day," he said, "the world is changing, the music is changing, the people are evolving and the technology is advancing at a rapid pace."

The former Trinity East student should know. His musical confidants and friends jam regularly with sessions involving instruments from the violin to the saxophone, playing jazz, calypso, blues, R&B, classical and pop.

He believes that innovation is what is needed to move pan music forward. "Somehow," he argues, "the steelpan fraternity hasn't been able to fully come up to the times with the rest of the world musically."

"Bands are still going to panorama with tunes from yesteryear and arrangements from certain bands sound the same year after year all because of this thing called a panorama winning formula."



**Aviel Scanterbury needs significant funds to pay for his postgraduate studies in jazz at George Mason University in the US. PHOTO: WESLEY GIBBINGS**

He says, as a result, so-called "pan tunes" sound the same "all the time."

"For a long time the creativity has been lost at Panorama and bands that dare to push the envelope of creativity and really try to capture the imagination of the crowd and judges are almost instantaneously rejected," he argues.

He however adds that "the steelband fraternity has been more welcoming to the idea of younger arrangers within the past few years and what I can say is that we the new generation of arrangers have a lot to offer by way of transforming the music."

"I know for me especially that I am always trying to improve from the following year not just in result but in the level of musicality," he said. "I always try to sound different."

"There are numerous and countless musical concepts that we as arrangers are not tapping into," Scanterbury said. "What has gone before has already worked but it is time for us as arrangers to look for the next best thing."

"We have to create our own legacy and try to push the boundaries of Panorama music while still keeping it in the spirit of Carnival and with more and more young arrangers coming to the mix, it's only a matter of time."

Two years from now, hopefully, Scanterbury will resume his role in creating this new legacy for pan music in T&T.

**• Scanterbury can be reached at 772-2279 with more ideas on how he can make it to George Mason.**