

Repertoire and Curriculum for the Modern Steelband

Presentation for the
Florida Music Educators' Association

Presented by David Knapp

At a glance

- Introduction to steelband
- Getting started with beginning bands
- Steelband Repertoire
- Multicultural Learning

Steelband's Scope

Steelband's role and expectations are not as explicitly defined as BCO ensembles.

What is your steelband about?

- Music literacy
- Steelband performance
- Multicultural learning

Introduction to Steelband

History

- Pan (as steel drums are called in Trinidad) began in Trinidad around the 1940s associated with lower class blacks.
- Very rich and thought-provoking history, relating to class, identity and globalization.
- Came to the US in the 1950s with Trinidadian musicians.

History

- Pan is now seen in primary and secondary schools, colleges, community bands and church bands.
- Pan can be studied at the university level. Most notably is Northern Illinois University, which offers a degree in pan performance.

Characteristics

- Pan is a family of instruments, with as many as a dozen kinds.
- Most pans approximate range and function of string instruments.
 - i.e. Tenor pan is like violin, bass pan is like double bass.
- School bands in the US commonly have between 15 and 35 pans.

Characteristics

- Some schools have smaller ensembles of 5 pans that meet extracurricularly.
- Play a variety of repertoire, ranging from traditional calypso and soca music, to classical, pop covers, and new music for pan.
- Various schedules and curriculum
 - During the regular school day
 - Extension of the band program
 - Before school / after school activity





Getting Started

Tips for Beginning Bands

Grades 6-12

Beginning with Rote

- Rote is a great way to begin learning piano
 - All students start at same level, regardless of prior music reading experience.
 - For new musicians, it familiarizes them with their instrument without having to worry about reading.
 - Teacher can discuss beginning playing technique, without notation getting in the way.

Beginning with Rote

- Use rote as primary method for the first month.
 - Have note names written on pan. Reinforce kinesthetic rote learning by saying names out loud.
- Choose a piece they already know to help aid in their learning and memorization.
- Keep melody simple.
 - If melody is too hard, you spend all your time working the front line, while back line gets bored.

Beginning with Rote

- Strophic, or simple theme and variation forms are the best tunes to begin with.
- Pick (or write) something that has typical parts.
- Within one week you can have them playing and feeling successful with their first steelband tune!

Transitioning to Reading

- Give basic instruction on reading notation.
 - Lecture
 - Worksheet
- Couple this with reading exercises around the third week, while continuing rote.
 - Begin with a few scales
 - Simple tunes (Mary Had a Little Lamb, etc.)
 - Keep things rhythmically simple, so students can focus on reading staff notation.

Solo Exercises

- Assign as soon as students are competent beginning readers (end of first month).
- While playing by oneself, students become responsible for their own learning.
 - This is crucial in steelband, where students can abuse the kinesthetic nature of the instrument!
- Suzuki books are an excellent source of scaled, short pieces of music.
 - Pans approximate the ranges of string instruments.

The background features a gradient from dark blue on the left to light blue and white on the right. Several bright, glowing white lines curve across the scene, creating a sense of motion and depth.

Beginning Rhythm

- Steelband is defined by its rhythmic pulse.
- There are idiomatic steelband rhythms.
- The better a student is at reading rhythm, the faster they will be able to learn new music.

Counting Syllables

- Teach students to read and count out loud using syllables (1 e + a 2 e + a).
 - Allows for easy communication about rhythm.
 - Giving names to parts of the beat helps to understand the character or feel of each part.
- Steelband music is usually in cut time or common time...***TEACH BOTH!***
- Steelband music almost always relies on the second subdivision (i.e. music in common time will have a 16th-note groove, music in cut time will have an eighth-note groove).

Counting Syllables

- Begin with first subdivision in common time—most beginners can count beats and off-beats.
- Clap, Speak and Chip
 - Speaking syllables while clapping reinforces hand motor skills.
 - Marking time with their feet develops independence.
 - If you make it fun, they'll think its fun.

Delivery Methods

- My Turn, Your Turn
 - Teacher can model correct rhythm
 - Develops aural skills
 - Beginning students have safety in numbers
- Worksheets
- Dictation
 - Combines aural skills with notation
 - Students cannot rely on neighbor

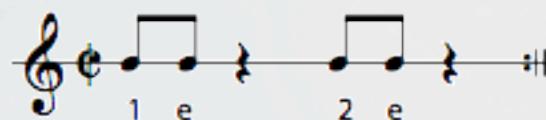
Delivery Methods

- Composition and Evaluation
 - Within set parameters, have student or group prepare a short rhythmic phrase
 - Have another student/group perform phrase
 - Have rest of the class evaluate their accuracy.
- Manage class by having successful students lead exercises.
 - Have the smart kid model for My Turn, Your Turn
- Bell Work: Begin each day with a short written phrase to perform as a class.

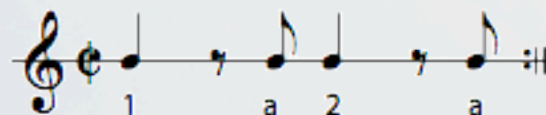
Adding 2nd Subdivision

- Gradually add the *e* and *a* into class activities, taking very small steps.

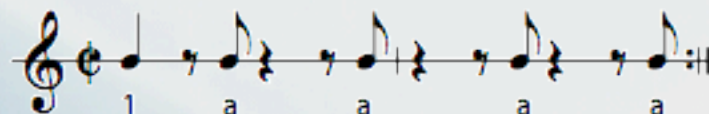
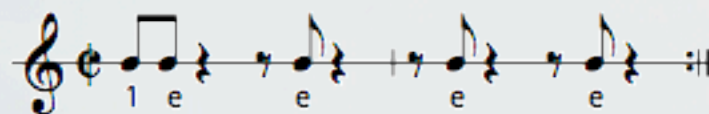
- Add the *e* following a numbered beat.



- Add the *a* preceding a numbered beat.



- Begin to take away beats, without mixing *e* and *a*. This helps to isolate the feel of each syllable.



Adding 2nd Subdivision

- During activities make sure students are clapping, speaking and chipping.
 - Research demonstrates students will understand rhythm better if their bodies are involved.
 - Point out to them that the *e* occurs right after a foot step: “Like you’re rebounding off of trampoline.” The *a* anticipates a foot step.
- Mix in the *ands*, coupled with an *e* or an *a*.
- Blend it all together, gradually combining all the elements.

Learning Strums

- There are common rhythmic patterns that will help players of all pans.
 - These strums are often played by the back line.
 - Front line players benefit from knowing what accompanies them.
- Here are some beginning strums to teach, once students have learned the second subdivision.
 - Calypso Triplet
 - Soca
 - Cuatro

Calypso Triplet



Soca



Cuatro



Learning Strums

- Get creative with strumming lessons
 - Divide into groups and have each group perform their strum alone; then add in another group; then another; switch groups.
 - Arrange class in a circle, have each student tap a strum on the shoulders of the person ahead of them; mix it up by assigning students a specific strum, so each person is tapping a different strum than they're feeling.
 - Pick a recording that has a learned strum and ask students to identify.
 - Play a calypso CD and have class accompany music by clapping strumming patterns.

Performance Repertoire

Tradition and Growth

What affects repertoire choice?

- Musical ideology
 - Is pan a world music ensemble, or a performance ensemble? Can it be both?
- Ensemble function
 - Performance oriented
 - Pull-out from band, etc.
 - Extracurricular
- Student ability
 - Teaching to the band you have, not the band you want to have.

What music will you teach?

Calypso



- First style steelbands started performing
- Exciting, danceable arrangements
- Often attainable by beginning bands
- Lyrics from original songs present great opportunity to discuss culture
- Strophic in form
- Groove is slightly swung

Soca



- Contemporary Trinidadian dance music; modern extension of Calypso
- Up-tempo and uses synthesized beats
- Strophic
- Rhythms are syncopated
- Lyrics are generally less meaningful than calypso

Competition Music



- Music performed in steelband competitions, most notably Trinidadian carnival.
- Long-format arrangements of calypso and soca tunes; between 8 and 12 minutes in length.
- Theme and variation with at least one key change.
- Very fast (between 112 and 135 bpm), syncopated and technically difficult.

Classical



- Steelbands since the beginning have included classical music in their repertoire.
- Great way to demonstrate versatility of pan.
- Timbre of pans work well for many classical pieces.
- Range of drums approximates that of string instruments, making many classical tunes doable with little arranging.

Jazz



- Sounds sweet on pan.
- There are several successful jazz combos that feature the steel drum to model for students.
- Jazz is a great opportunity for students to improvise.
- Include traditional jazz instruments in your steelband performances; likewise, include pan in your jazz band.

Pop



- Students love playing popular tunes.
- Audiences love hearing them.
- Since the beginning, steel bands have adopted popular tunes.
- It's a great opportunity to discuss arranging because students have the original to compare it to.

Original Compositions



- There are some excellent pieces out there that advance the musical range of steelband.
- Transforms student and audience perceptions of pan.
- Performing original compositions means that more composers will write for the instrument.

Multicultural Learning

“Understanding music in relation to history and culture.”

–National Standard 9, Sunshine State Standard C

- Cultural and Historical Learning
 - Trinidad and the Caribbean
 - Colonialism
 - Class struggle
- Multiculturalism
 - Identity and meaning
 - Self and other

World Music vs Multicultural Music

- Positivistic (facts)
- Culture presented as superficial knowledge
- Low-order thinking
- Discursive
- Culture presented as part of the music
- High-order thinking

Carnival Music in Trinidad

By Shannon Dudley

- Fun read! Written as a first person account of carnival.
- Accurate, without being too wordy.
- Text ties into accompanying audio CD.
- Includes some class exercises.
- Great for grades 10-12.
- \$20.95 from Oxford University Press, 90 pages.

The Steelband Movement

By Stephen Stuempfle

- Very informative, the *magnus liber* of steelband history.
- Dense and academic.
- For the director, not the student.
- Does contain excerptable pages for students, including rich first-person narratives from the '30s and '40s of steelbandmen, reporters and government officials.
- \$22.50 from [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Sample Lessons

Carnival Music in Trinidad

In-Class Activities (provided in textbook)

- *Compare the instrumental accompaniment in Sparrow's 1956 "Jean and Dinah" (Track 6) to Rudder's 1998 "High Mas" (Track 9).*
- *Listening to "High Mas" (Track 9), chip and clap the fixed interlocking rhythms.*
- *Distinguish the different layers of texture in Phase II's "Back Line" (Track 14).*

Carnival Music in Trinidad

Guided reading worksheets (not provided)

- *How does Dudley define **social identity**? What are some ways Trinidadians identify socially? What are some ways you identify socially?*
- *Explain the **Man of Words** tradition. What are some examples of this tradition in North America?*
- *Describe physical differences between the **tent** and the **road**. Describe differences in function.*

Calypso Songwriting

- In groups of 3-4, compose a simple calypso with lyrics about their everyday lives.
 - * *At this point, they have already heard plenty of calypso at beginning/end of class, etc.*
- May want to provide examples of calypso chord changes.
- Blend student musical ability.
- Perform a song or two at the semester concert, accompanied by guitar and shaker. Provide a lyrics sheet with the program for audience.

Panorama

- Divide class into 5 groups, each group follows a steelband through Panorama semifinals and finals.
- Week before finals, groups present about their band's chances in the finals.
 - Discuss song, composer, how they did in semifinals, what the press has to say, etc.
 - Trash talk a little bit.
- Interested persons get together Saturday night and listen to the live internet broadcast.

Panorama Web Resources

- [When Steel Talks](#): New York pan website. Comprehensive coverage of Panorama, with audio interviews, articles, point standings. Downloadable judges' forms for students to fill out during performance!
- [WST Message Board](#): Pan discussion, lively during carnival.
- [PanTrinbago](#): Official government agency for pan, contains important press releases.

Panorama Web Resources

- [T&T News](#): National newspaper with entertainment coverage.
- [T&T Express](#): Another paper.

Various bands also have websites.

Directed Independent Studies

This history is so rich—be creative!

- Form Analysis
 - Student analyzed Kitchener’s “Bee’s Melody” and compared it to Renegades panorama performance of the same tune.
- Build a Tamboo Bamboo band.
 - Student created instruments, found out about sound production.
 - Student researched and presented on history.

What is your steelband about?

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http://leonperformingarts.org/files/FMEA2008_steelband.pdf

Steelband Resource Guide

Presented to the Florida Music Educators' Association annual conference
Tampa Convention Center
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Instruments

Instrumentation is still not standardized in the steelband world. Here are some explanations and definitions.

- Chrome is simply a metallic finish; painted is some sort of clear varnish on top and painted finish on the skirt. Chrome sounds brighter and is more expensive.
- A bore pan is one with holes drilled in the bowl. Bore pans are louder and brighter.
- There are tenor pans with low Ds and low Cs. Buy low Cs.
- There are both double second pans and double tenor pans. They are very different note layouts, but occupy roughly the same range. For pedagogical reasons, I suggest getting double seconds and dividing the players for when the score calls for double tenor and double seconds. This makes your players more versatile in your ensemble.
- Likewise, there are cellos and guitars. Cellos are really heavy. I recommend getting guitars, and dividing up the section to make Guitar 1s and Guitar 2s.
- There are low C and low Bb basses. Buy low Bbs.

There are still many different kinds of pans, some of which are not very common. In general, steelband literature is 5-voice. But you can accomplish this with only four instrument layouts: tenors, double seconds, triple guitars and basses. Depending on the piece, just divide up the double seconds and/or the triple guitars. Here are some sample instrument packages.

5-Piece: Tenor, Double Second 1, Double Second 2, Triple Guitar, Six Bass

10-Piece: 3 Tenors, 2 Double Second 1s, 2 Double Second 2s, 2 Triple Guitars, Six Bass

20-Piece: 7 Tenors, 3 Double Second 1s, 4 Double Second 2s, 4 Triple Guitars, 2 Six Basses

Coyle Drums • www.coyledrums.com • (866) 355-3786

Alan Coyle apprenticed with Ellie Mannette for several years and is very knowledgeable and talented. He's located in Pensacola, FL.

Tenor	22.5" Painted	\$1900
	22.5" Chrome	\$2500
	Oversize Painted	\$2300
	Oversize Chrome	\$3300
Double Second	22.5" Chrome	\$3300
	Oversize Painted	\$2450
Triple Guitar	22.5" Painted	\$2600
	22.5" Chrome	\$3700
	Oversize Painted	\$3100
	Oversize Chrome	\$4600

Six Bass	Low Bb	\$3800
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Coyle Drums has recently begun importing less expensive Trinidadian drums. Alan Coyle then spends a few hours touching them up and reselling them at a price much lower than instruments he built. Below is a list of these prices.

Tenor	22.5 Chrome	\$800
Double Seconds	22.5 Chrome	\$900
Triple Guitars	22.5 Painted	\$1000

Mannette Steel Drums • www.mannettesteeldrums.com • (866) 237-3786

Ellie Mannette is the father of the modern steel pan. His instruments are excellent. These days his apprentices make most of the instruments.

Tenor	22.5" Painted	\$2250
	22.5" Chrome	\$2475
Double Second	22.5" Painted	\$2550
	22.5" Chrome	\$3075
Triple Guitar	22.5" Painted	\$2450
	22.5" Chrome	\$2875
Six Bass	22.5" Painted	\$2995
	22.5" Chrome	\$4600

Panyard • www.panyard.com • (800) 377-0202

Most popular manufacturer in the U.S. Their product is good, but their prices are a bit ridiculous.

Tenor	Oversize Painted	\$4195
	Oversize Chrome	\$4995
Double Second	Oversize Painted	\$6595
	Oversize Chrome	\$7995
Triple Guitar	Oversize Painted	\$6495
Four Cello	Oversize Painted	\$8495
Six Bass	Oversize Painted	\$9295
Eight Bass	Oversize Painted	\$12,995

Kyle Dunleavy • www.kdsteeldrums.com • (215) 300-9849

Trained while working at Panyard. Good product.

Tenor	22.5" Painted	\$1795
	22.5" Chrome	\$1995
Double Second	22.5" Painted	\$1895
	22.5" Chrome	\$2195
Triple Guitar	22.5" Painted	\$2295
	22.5" Chrome	\$2795
Six Bass	22.5" Painted	\$2995

Tropical Hammer (Tom Reynolds) • www.tropicalhammer.com • (407) 323-7079

These instruments are a great value. In past years I would not have recommended these pans, but I recently heard a nice sounding band with all Reynolds pans. Great idea for a program just starting out.

Tenor	22.5" Paint/Chrome	\$900
Double Tenor	22.5" Paint/Chrome	\$1000
Triple Guitar	22.5" Paint/Chrome	\$1000
Six Bass	22.5" Painted	\$1250

Merlin Gill • www.gillspanshop.com • (868) 662-0214

Most popular Trinidadian builder for the U.S. The tenors are a good beginning instrument. I have ordered several tenors from Gill.

Tenor	22.5" Chrome	\$550
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Tuning

Tuning is a necessary periodic cost for steelbands. Tuners vary in price depending on their quality. Most are between \$75 and \$125 per hour. Like a mechanic, go with someone good and whom you trust. A twenty-piece steelband will take between 10 and 25 hours to tune, depending on how well it has been maintained. Preventative maintenance is cheaper and your band will sound better. Almost any pan builder also tunes. Alan Coyle is my preferred tuner, and resides in Pensacola, FL. His rates are \$125/hour.

Gear

Prices on stands and cases are provided for tenor instruments as a sample of expected costs. Gear for other instruments will be more expensive. As a rule of thumb, cases and stands for a double second instrument will cost roughly twice as much; for triple guitars, roughly three times as much. Check out more precise prices online.

Pan Stands

I recommend buying adjustable stands, if you can afford them. Pipe stands don't allow for easy height adjustment, and it's very important for technique that students play on pans set for the correct height. Then again, pipe stands can be constructed really cheaply.

Pipe Stands	\$30	Cheap, but not adjustable; construct yourself
Powder Coated	\$125 (Coyle)	Adjustable, rolling wheels
Chrome Tripod	\$145 (Coyle)	Adjustable, easily collapsible

Cases

Humes & Berg	\$170 (Coyle)	Solid construction, not too heavy
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Mallets

Powder Coated	\$18/pair (Coyle)	Comfortable and durable aluminum body with rubber tip
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Earplugs

ETY20 earplugs from etymotic.com cost \$12 individually, or \$6 if you purchase 50 or more. These earplugs sound great across the spectrum. Steelband is loud—this is a requirement for my students.

Engine Room

Prices for the following are from steveweissmusic.com

Drumset: A cheap fusion shell kit is a great kit for steelband, but don't skimp on the cymbals. Also, the extra mounted tom is not so important for steelband, so feel free to get a 4-piece kit.

Sample drumset: Pearl Vision CSX Fusion 5-piece drumset (\$839), Sabian 13" AA Regular Hi-Hat (\$239), Sabian 16" AA Medium Crash (\$159), Sabian 20" HH Medium Heavy ride (\$319), Gibraltar Vinyl Throne \$(50). Total: \$1606.

Brake Drum (Iron): I get mine free from my mechanic and spray paint them. Then go to Home Depot and buy 3/16" metal rods for the beaters. If you wanted to spend money, you can find these for around \$40.

Cow Bells: I'd get a high and medium pitched. LP Bongo Deluxe for \$38.95. If you are going to get a few cowbells and jam blocks, you may also want to consider getting an everything rack to hold them. Make sure the cowbells are mountable.

Jam Blocks: These are a great substitute for cowbells on pieces where the metallic cowbells stand out too much. Go ahead and pick up two, a high—LP Blue Jam Block for \$24—and a low—LP Jam Block Red for \$27.

Everything Rack and Stand: This is certainly optional, but it makes classroom organization much easier. LP Everything Rack for \$71.95, Gibraltar Tripod Stand for \$50. If you or a student are really clever, you can put together a rig to hold all your mountable percussion and your iron with an everything rack, a stand and a snare stand.

Cabasa: LP Cabasa for \$30

Claves: LP Clave for \$9

Congas: LP Aspire for \$279.

Scratcher: LP Merengue Guiro for \$66

Shakers: LP Shake-It for \$14 and some egg shakers.

Tambourine: Pearl Tambourine for \$27.

Triangle: LP Triangle \$23.

Sheet Music

Pan Ramajay • www.panramajay.com

Excellent source of new music for pan. The world's best pan composers in one place. Seriously, their music is exceptional.

Panyard • www.panyard.com

These guys were one of the first to catalog a whole bunch of pan music by going down to Trinidad and transcribing. Their catalog has not grown much recently.

Hillbridge Music • www.hillbridge.com

One of the largest collections of pan music, and they add new stuff all the time. I've been pleased with them but I've also experienced a few editing errors (like the score not being the same version as the parts).

Pan Press • www.panpress.com

Not a huge catalog, but good.

Coyle Drums • www.coyledrums.com

Some of this stuff is really good, others are average. Luckily you can listen to most things before you buy them. My favorite, of course, is Dain Brammage.

Engine Room Publishing • www.engineerroompublishing.com

In the interest of full disclosure, this is a company I just formed with some colleagues. We're only a week old, so our library is very small right now. We are specifically geared toward pan education and hope to provide valuable resources soon, like curriculum, classroom posters, etc. In the meantime, we have a few dozen charts available now. Check back with us in the coming months as we add more products.

Books, CDs, Videos

Must Have Book List:

Dudley, S. (2004). *Carnival music in Trinidad*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nurse, M. (2007). *Unheard voices: The rise of steelband and calypso in the Caribbean and North America*. <http://steelbandunheardvoices.com>.

Stuempfle, S. (1995). *The steelband movement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Tanner, C. (2007). *The steelband game plan: Strategies for starting, building and maintaining your pan program*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

If You're Adventurous Book List:

Anthony, M. (1989). *Parade of the carnivals*. Port of Spain, Trinidad: Circle Press.

Cowley, J. (1996). *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grant, T. (2004). *Carnivalitis: The conflicting discourse of carnival*. New York: Yacos Publications.

Johnson, K. (2002). *Renegades*. Oxford: Macmillan Education.

Liverpool, H. (2001). *Rituals of Power and Rebellion*. Kingston, Jamaica: Research Associates School Times Publications.

Lovelace, E. (1998). *The dragon can't dance*. London: André Deutsch Ltd.

Mason, P. (1998). *Bacchanal! The carnival culture of Trinidad*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Recommended Audio Recordings:

Calypso Awakening: Various Artists (amazon.com)

Autobiography of the Now: David Rudder (ecaroh.com)

The Passage: Andy Narell with Calypsociation (panramajay.com)

Burnin': Miami University Steel Band (panramajay.com)

Golden Era: Renegades Steel Orchestra (ecaroh.com)

Rhythm Through the Unobstructed View: Liam Teague and Robert Chappell (panramajay.com)

This list could go on and on...

Recommended Viewing:

World Steelband Festival 2000 (ecaroh.com)

Panorama 2006 (ecaroh.com)

Island Grooves drumset instructional DVD (panyard.com)

This document is also online at http://leonperformingarts.org/files/FMEA2008_steelband.pdf. Use of this document is protected under common fair use law.