

SHERN HALL

Methodist Youth Steelband

Louis Armstrong once said, "There are only two kinds of music. Good music and the other kind".



➤ Meet a group that is certainly giving us some good music. They are The Shern Hall Youth Steel Band, a group that is just about to celebrate their first year as a collective. Located in the Shern Hall Methodist Church, Walthamstow, East London, this group has what it takes to be the East London musical sensation.

They have already played for the monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth 11, when she opened the East London Business School, at the University of East London, and has toured in Europe, namely to perform at the Hamburg Altona Festival, in Germany.

The group had known each other for many years. They were all members of the Shern Hall Youth Gospel Choir, but were interested in taking their musical talents to a higher plane. The idea of forming themselves into a church steel band became a reality. The band is very much at ease as a conventional steel band – playing with stands, and as a pan-around-neck steel band. Given the fact that pan-around-neck steel bands are rare, this is a welcome addition to the pan-around-neck traditional steel band fraternity.

The setting up of the steel band was the brain-child of Mrs. Blondell Campbell, one of the church wardens, who made a call to Grafton Yearwood – a local pan tuner – asking him to renovate some old steel pans. Blondell had been instrumental in getting some steel pans

from a local school that had closed. The pans were very old indeed and after some discussion, Nostalgia Steel Band agreed to loan the church some of their instruments to get the steel band off the ground. The rapid progress of the young people was remarkable to say the least. Grafton recalled how they all seem to get together with a keen ear for the music and in particular, the steel pan genre. The leader of the band, Evangelica Brumant, is keenly supported by her sister, Bernita and her mother, Elvena. Indeed, the group itself consists of five sets of siblings; the Ampofo Family, the Kaka Family, the Bonds Family and the Ukandu Family are also represented. And all the brothers and sisters work well as a collective and pray together before and after every steel pan practice. It is a joy to see young people with so much devotion to their art.

The minister of the Shern Hall Church, Rev. Jenny Sweet is also a keen supporter of the steel band. Indeed, the band has only recently played at her wedding reception and now has a string of engagements that has followed that exposure. The Rev. Jenny Sweet is very keen for this progress to continue. She told me recently, "This is the result of the hard work of the young people themselves. We are very proud of them".

By **Lionel McCalman**