



»» THE STEEL PAN ACADEMY IS BORN

Two years ago Panpodium featured an article on Diana Hancox and her work on promoting the steel pan art form in Warwickshire.

Diana's role in Warwickshire ceased, and although on a protected salary and spending some months looking at alternative employment possibilities, she realised that her heart was indeed with pan and promoting its teaching and learning. In August 2006, Diana was invited to speak about her work at the International Conference on Steel Pan in London. She told the story of "The Magic Sticks", about the magic of pan and about the need to raise the status of Pan to that of other instruments. In preparing for this talk she realised the need to work on what had been developed so far and the idea of the Steel Pan Academy was born.

In September 2006, Diana was asked to run some evening groups at Harbury and so the first Academy groups were founded. These groups are

held on a Wednesday evening involving Junior, Youth and Adult groups. All three groups have been a great success. They are booked for every weekend this summer.

Diana has always been keen to work with others in the Pan industry and has always had close links with Coventry's Phase One Steel Orchestra, directed by Stephon Phillip. This year Phase One decided to go on tour to Barcelona and invited Academy Youth@Harbury to join them. This has involved a mammoth fundraising effort that has created a great spirit amongst the groups who toured in July. The Steel Pan Academy and Phase One believe that this tour is a great way to enhance all their steel pan skills.

From September 2007, the Academy will be providing regular peripatetic steel pan teaching to a number of

schools in Coventry and Warwickshire, it will be hosting after school groups in different areas of Coventry and Warwickshire every night of the week to junior, youth, adult, and U3A groups. The Academy will also be running the Academy Stars, a top band for their most able pannists. The Academy Stars will be directed by Bev Wickham and supported by the rest of the team, with some special sessions run by Stephon.

Plans and ambitions are many; next year the Academy will be running its first Steel Pan Festival, hosting a special event in October for Black history Month and continuing Diana's mission to raise the status of pan by working with BAS to get a nationally accredited system for pan set up in this UK. It has not been an easy ride, and it has certainly been hard work, but Diana, Bev and Lisa are a strong and established



team, with supportive schools and all working closely with pan colleagues and with a dedication to fulfill their visions. Within a few months, the Steel Pan Academy has made its mark, it is a non-profit making organization and aims to succeed in all its plans and ambitions, ensuring that the quality of steel pan playing, teaching and learning flourishes in the Midlands and beyond.

For more information on the Steel Pan Academy Contact Diana at diana@steelpanacademy.com or call 07765 811042

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