



# MARK LOQUAN

## *celebrating 10 years*

# OF COMPOSING FOR PAN

While I have been composing music specifically for the pan community over the years, composing is something that I have been doing from my teenage years in several genres of music.



➤ It is only after learning to play the tenor pan as a stage side member at Silver Stars in the early '90's, and later performing in several Panoramas (with Super Sonics, Starlift, Potential Symphony, Silver Stars and Skiffle Bunch), Pan is Beautiful, Music Festivals, that I turned to composing music for pan in 1999. In 2000, I would play tenor with Skiffle Bunch at the World

Steelband Festival in Trinidad in the year 2000, and later with Steel Pan Lovers (Finland) at the European Steelpan Festival in the year 2002 in Sete, France.

Composing music for 2008 therefore represents 10 consecutive years of writing for the local and global pan community, beginning with the song "Glory" co-composed with Andy Sheafe, and sung by Sheldon Blackman in 1999. For

2008, three songs are released, one composed with Edwin Pouchet and two composed with Ken "Professor" Philmore, being vocalized by Steve Sealy ("Celebration Time"), Kerwyn Trotman ("Time to Breakaway") and Destra Garcia ("Hooked").

One can get a sense of my journey over the years by reading a synopsis behind each song from [www.markloquan.pan-jumbie.com/](http://www.markloquan.pan-jumbie.com/), a journey that

I share with many along the way with other composers, arrangers, players, singers, lyricists, studio producers and musicians, panyard communities and steelbands in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad, schools, et al. Each year, and each song, has brought its own unique and memorable experiences, all of which I am most grateful for and give thanks. **A most memorable experience occurred in 2006, after being awarded along with lyricists Keron Boodoosingh and Joel Feveck, and artiste Destra Garcia, the COTT Pan Song of the Year, "Colours Again", a song that was performed by several steelbands across the world.**

Over the years though, various goals have been set and some achieved, and some not. One of those areas I would like to see more of is the whole aspect of music literacy, with pannists viewing themselves as musicians and our music being played beyond the steelpan, and being integrated into realm of conventional instruments.

### PAN IN EDUCATION

Thanks to Pan Podium for highlighting in one of its previous magazines (Issue #14), the Pan in Education CD, co-produced with Sanch Electronix Ltd. It was really the aim of linking our music and the promotion of music literacy that drove such a project to be born, intended for the educational institutions and pan communities. While the project includes music by several steelbands and arrangers, it is really a methodology and an experiment, for any one or any band to use.

**The questions I pose to the pan community are:**

- What if our pannists/musicians could not only learn by aural skills but could also read and write music?
- What if all of our musical arrangements on pan were not only recorded but musically scored and preserved to become part of the educational landscape for others to analyse and learn from?
- What if we were to really harness the true talent and potential of our composers, pannists, arrangers, transcribers, etc to produce a whole new industry that could start from the classroom?

Many of us have experienced the time it takes to learn a single Panorama arrangement, only for many great works



to be lost or forgotten, either because after several weeks or months, many players have "forgotten the notes", or because the music simply was not scored. The Pan in Education double CD therefore not only includes pan recordings, but a second CD which includes all the scores for each pan (in Finale, MIDI and PDF formats), where individual parts can be isolated or combined together at any tempo to match individual ways of learning. There is no reason why any band could not utilize this methodology to preserve their repertoires and to accelerate the learning process for new recruits.

My experience in Finland with Steel Pan Lovers in 2002, was stimulating in this regard, where I encountered so many young people, music literate at an early age in their schools, playing pan, and learning "Pan in A Minor" or "Hot, Hot, Hot" from scores. They were playing our own music not only because they liked the music, but also because it was scored. I wonder how many people could play Mozart or Beethoven's music from centuries ago, if it was not scored.

For the Pan in Education II, yet to be released, I have tried to push the boundary once more, by having a complete pan arrangement of one of my compositions, "Nostalgia", performed on conventional orchestra with piano, strings, brass, woodwind, etc. The song was arranged by Liam Teague, and transcribed for orchestra by Gary Gibson, and performed by that National Sinfonia in Trinidad on August 19, 2007 at Queen's Hall, Trinidad.

### MUSIC LITERACY TRUST

This not-for-profit organization was formed in 2004, which I have chaired since its inception. The Board includes Dr. Pat Bishop, Liam Teague, Dr. Jit Samaroo, Dr. Anne Osborne and Satanand Sharma (both of University of the West Indies(UWI), Center of Creative and Festival Arts (CCFA), headed by Sat), and Angela Lee Loy (Managing Partner of Aegis Bus. Solutions). The Trust has collected funds from several organizations, and has awarded scholarships to several young talented pannists at the UWI CCFA's music degree or certificate programme specializing in pan, as well as to Trinidad nationals attending the graduate pan programme at Northern Illinois University (NIU) in music. Over the last two years, this concept was later extended to financially assist pannists in various steelband communities with music examinations to improve music literacy along with instruments. The Trust is currently working with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and the Birdsong Academy (where there is an excellent model of community development through music programmes) with the aim of applying similar models to other pan communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thanks to Robbie Joseph for the opportunity to be featured in the Pan Podium magazine, which indeed has set very high standards, and to the entire pan community for their support over the years and sharing this milestone of 10 years with me.

All photos by Bertrand De Peeza  
By **Mark Loquan**