

pan podium special feature



Swiss Steelband Association

Founded in 2004, PANCH - The Swiss Steelband Association's goal was to ensure contact within the swiss pan movement as well as internationally. Switzerland is a small country – but with many pan players, hence it is important to them not to be isolated but to have a continuous interchange with what is happening with pan globally – as to planned activities, development of the instrument and its art form, education, information platforms and other associations. Brigitte Fischer was elected as President in 2009 becoming the first woman to hold this post.

PANCH have incorporated an advisory cultural committee consisting of eight professional musicians – Tamla Batra, Junior Edwards, Patrik Bernard, Walter Chiment, Gary Padmore, Claudio Pini, Esa Tervala, and Yaira Yonne. Their management board consists of

Brigitte Fischer	President
Reto Frank	Finances
Martin Grah	International Relations
Gabi Wigger	Events
Fred Hürlimann	Secretary
Pit Zünd	Editor of our Information bulletin and Member Services

PANCH's membership comprises of forty steel bands and seventy individuals. To date, they are about one hundred and fifty steel bands in Switzerland; however, a lot of them are not yet interested in becoming a member of any form of association. However, PANCH continues to promote their aims and objectives to all Swiss steel bands and any individuals interested in the steel pan culture and its art form. This tireless determination and laborious drive ensures that PANCH is continually increasing in membership and recognition. Their annual membership fee is 30 Swiss francs for an individual and 90 for bands, companies and organisations.

The PANCH Award was initiated in 2005. PANCH gives this annual award to an individual who has rendered outstanding services to the steel band music in Switzerland. In 2007 it was awarded to Pan Pioneer, Sterling Betancourt, for his outstanding services not only to steelband music in Switzerland, but in Europe as a whole. Claudio Pini received the award in 2008 for his exceptional talent as an arranger/composer and his teaching abilities.

He has worked with steelbands all over Switzerland and performed with Casablanca, Renegades, Phase II Pan Groove steel orchestras in Trinidad and Holiday for Pans and Panch 2000 in Switzerland. He is currently the resident arranger for Ferrum Helveticum. Carola Bestgen received the 2009 award as ambassador of pan, thanks to her commitment and dedication for the handicapped

and her steelband for the handicapped, Extrem Normal – Normal Extrem. She achieved unimagined goals by gaining the attention of many famous personalities and other orchestra's to the steelpan instrument.

The objective of their association is the enhancement of the Swiss pan community by means of activities such as launching big band projects like PANCH 2000, compiling a pan curriculum with various workshops, offering an e-mail information service to our members (concerts, advertising, general pan information) and providing a quarterly printed newsletter. Brigitte's personal goal is to find a way to enhance cooperation among the many individuals who champion the steel band movement in Switzerland. The Board of the association works as a team where everyone has responsibilities. Besides the presidential and representative tasks, Brigitte is also responsible for education/workshops and web mastering.

Brigitte visited Trinidad and Tobago 2010 Carnival celebrations where she played with the Phase 11 Pan Groove steel orchestra led by the world renowned composer, arranger and player, Len Boogsie Sharpe, When asked about her experience she replied, ' I think I could write a whole book. It was such an honour to play with one of the best bands in the world! I am still delirious with joy about the opportunity I got. My sincere thanks to all the members of Phase II and Boogsie. I had so many extraordinary experiences - meeting and getting to know all the nice musicians in the band, playing Boogsie's great arrangement and seeing how it developed from verse and chorus to a masterpiece – incredible! I also got the opportunity to see a lot of this beautiful country, too.'

We are looking forward to an active cooperation with and contribution to the worldwide pan community.



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