

Chair's Foreword



2009 was another difficult year for the steel band fraternity - one of the hardest I have ever known. BAS members have not only suffered from a shortage of bookings and performances, but have faced challenges arising from a lack of funding and premises. This may well be because we are in the grips of a global recession. If it is, I hope we get a relief from it very soon for the survival and preservation of pan is at stake.

But it is not only in the UK that steel bands are struggling. In the United States they are experiencing similar problems and to add to their troubles this year they were not paid the prize monies that were promised after Panorama. Some might say we are lucky here in the UK - at least the bands were given an appearance fee. But the point is that both situations are an insult to the pan men and women, and to the instrument. Globally, we have to find a way to be able to dictate our own destiny for the future of the art form and for the young people who we hope will continue to take pan forward.

I recently attended the Pan Trinidad convention and Annual Meeting. I went hoping for change. For too long the world governing body for steel pan has done little to support international steel band bodies. Let us hope the change in leadership within Pan Trinidad will bring about a change in attitude to steel bands around the world. Initial meetings with Keith Diaz, Richard Forteau and Keith St Cyr in London in early December clearly demonstrated their willingness to work more closely with BAS to develop the culture both here and in Europe. Let us hope this new approach to partnership works and the world wide development of pan continues.

In 2010, as well as our extensive programme of activities, BAS will continue to pursue our current programme of acquiring qualifications for steel pan tutors and pan tuners and our discussions with the University of the West Indies is on going.

We will also be supporting the UK Pan Tuners Guild on work they are initiating. In relation to the National Panorama competition, we have the financial commitment of the Greater London Authority for production costs. BAS will now face the challenging task of raising additional funds to ensure that bands are properly compensated for their efforts.

As 2009 comes to a close I would like thank my executive for their hard work and support but a special thank you goes to Debi Gardner, the Association's Secretary, for she is the engine room of this organisation and I don't think I could do the job that I do without her. I would also like to thank and congratulate Robbie Joseph on celebrating ten years promoting the music and culture of the Caribbean through this magazine and website – www.panpodium.com. Finally, I would like to thank members of the FDF for the work they have done this year, and in particular Joel 'Tubbs' Hamilton Mills, for a very successful Pan Explosion. I urge all member bands to encourage their young people to attend FDF meetings for the future of this organisation, and indeed of pan throughout the UK, is in their hands.

I wish you all a prosperous and successful 2010.

Pepe Francis

Chair, British Association of Steelbands