

**The Carnavalesque and reintegration of the self:
A look at how musicking and pan build inner and
outer harmony**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the idea of the *carnavalesque* and its relationship to the psychological concept of the reintegration of the self. As a starting point, I reviewed the literature on the carnivalesque, flow theory, participatory musicking and Turner's theories of *liminality* and *communitas*.

My research goals were to gain insight into how musicking, when rooted in the *carnavalesque*, leads to Bateson's theory of the (re)integration of the self, and builds community. I took a multi-methods approach to qualitative research; it consisted of a literature review, participant observation, in person and written interviews, reflection journals, storytelling and auto-ethnographic performance. I looked at pan, musicking and the integration of the self from two perspectives: 1) What characteristics make the pan an ideal instrument to quickly achieve flow states and 2) The role of the steelpan community in carnival and its broader implications in helping individuals and communities experience the (re)integration of the self. I followed that up by exploring how musicking, pan and the carnivalesque translate in contexts outside of the panyard in the Canadian diaspora. This was done by discussing the work of Toronto-based musician Joy Lapps, who teaches pan from a community arts perspective. Finally, I took a personal look at how I put the spirit of musicking, pan, and the carnivalesque into praxis; by facilitating a participatory music collective (retro electro music collective) and performing an auto-ethnographic performance piece, *Carnivallissima, Carnival is Me*.

I found that the carnivalesque and pan is a rich cultural expression that facilitates the reintegration of the self through connection to the community and to a deeper part of the self. Panyards are social spaces that openly invite others to be part of the musicking flow irrespective of race, class or gender. This paradigm is an expression of *primary abundance*, which stems from the belief of many indigenous cultures that the world is profoundly abundant. This contrasts sharply with modern western culture, which is mired in an economically driven ontology of scarcity.

There is a great need to share the abundance ontology of the carnivalesque in contexts outside of its traditional borders. In Toronto, Joy Lapps is helping the Caribbean and the wider multicultural community of children, parents and families find a deeper understanding of self and the self in community through the playing of pan. I also found that musicking helped people in the panyard and in the *retro electro music collective* to get into the flow and experience the integration of the self by sharing food, developing self-worth, and cultivating more joy and clarity, which provided the space for a shift in perception about themselves and the world around them.

The implication of this research is that musicking experiences can generate feelings of goodwill and generosity towards others. This raises the question of how we can continue to build momentum away from a scarcity ontology towards a way of being that values harmony and overflowing abundance.

FOREWORD

My major research project entitled "The Carnavalesque and reintegration of the self: A look at how musicking and pan build inner and outer harmony", consisting of a paper and a performance, is the culmination of a 2.5 year journey. It is a reflection of my expanded sense of self. When I started my *masters of environmental studies* in the fall of 2014, I was quite unsure of the direction I wanted to take in my research, and more broadly, in my life. The first year, my *plan of study* (POS) focused on renewable energy and community. During my second year, I started to really find my footing and realized that in order for my research direction to be meaningful, I would have to explore music, because it is a medium from which I find my true vitality and joy. I was expanding as an artist and a musician, and I soon began to share this expansion with fellow students and staff at the Faculty of Environmental Studies. Once I made that decision to commit to integrating myself, music would become the unifying element to intersect with themes of community and social change.

In my POS, I split my area of concentration into 2 major components; 1) Renewable Energy for Cultural Change and 2) Musicking and Community Development for Cultural Transition. Component 1 reflected my early work in the MES program. I had considered using music and an arts-based research approach to raise awareness and foster dialogue around climate change issues and the benefits of renewable energy technology. I was motivated by the fact that art is crucial to allowing people to see issues from perspectives that are simply not possible from a word-based, or "rational" standpoint. I still believe that there is a great role for art, and music, in helping to usher in a new socio-political era regarding issues of energy and renewables. However, I stopped pursuing this theme as my research grew into musicking. Along the way, I also strengthened my connection to my heritage of Trinidad and Tobago; on a summer visit in 2015, I attended an International Conference on steelpan. I found the cultural history and development of the steelpan fascinating, which provided further clarity in my research direction.

The learning objectives for my musicking component in my POS centred on arts-based research methods, and understanding how music can function to bring people together, encourage fresh forms of communication and then propel movements of social change.

My final paper takes a comprehensive look into how musicking, the carnivalesque and pan help individuals experience what Gregory Bateson terms the *integration of the self*. My performance piece, *Carnivallissima, Carnival is Me*, was an auto-biographical account of how the MES experience, the carnivalesque, pan, and finally musicking, led to my own self-(re)integration. This was a major step for me-accepting my vulnerability and being willing to share an intimate part of myself with others through spoken word, photography, video and composing music. The POS served as a first step towards this newfound

expanded sense of self. I couldn't have reached this end stage without planting the initial seeds; the writing of the POS in late 2015 was a written account of my inner being whispering softly to myself, "This is a chance to follow your heart." I am eternally grateful for these 2.5 years, and all those who have inspired me and with whom I've co-created.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is the story of my *Master of Environmental Studies* (MES) Major Project and a reflection on how I have grown throughout it. In it, I explore the idea of the *carnavalesque* and its relationship to the psychological concept of the reintegration of the self. *Carnavalesque* is a broad term that, among carnival theorists, may encompass several of the following meanings:

[...] the ludic (spontaneous and playful) behavior associated with carnival license when manifested in ordinary moments; philosophies of life which are influenced by ideas prominent in carnival, including masking or changeability; the idea of seizing the moment; sensuality and social communion; and finally, the heterogeneous assemblage of ethnic and socio-cultural enclaves which interact performatively under the umbrella of carnival but also in a less formalized way in the everyday life of their respective societies. (Armstrong, 2010, p. 449-450)

I have connected with my personal familial roots in the *carnavalesque*, which is embodied in the cultural expression of Trinidad and Tobago. All of the above meanings of the term have played out at different points and phases of my personal journey into building community and developing a greater sense of 'place'. I have used music making art as a community building practice, which involved a growing awareness of feeling connected to others through music. With that growing connection came an acute sense of spontaneous *communitas* which can be classified in ephemeral terms as comparable to "a moment of utopian unity, in which human differences and hierarchies seem to fade into perfect cohesion." (Turino, 1982a; Madison, p. 175) Combining theory with praxis helped me to develop internal and external *communitas* as a personal methodology and praxis. Action with theory entailed understanding my family history more deeply and connecting with the steel pan communities, both in Trinidad and in the

Greater Toronto Area through interviews and spending time in local panyards. It also included connecting with fellow MES (Master's of Environmental Studies) students in making our own music. Most importantly, it involved making the deepest connection: with myself; consciously connecting with my internal environment allowed me to find alignment with the external environment and vice versa.

My personal journey into discovering the beauty of *carnivalesque communitas* began in the summer of 2014, prior to my commencement of the MES program. After not visiting my paternal home in Trinidad for many years, I spent time with the land and people where I had spent every summer of my youth. This external journey of travel became an internal self-exploration to help heal and recover a forgotten part of myself. This practice of self (re)discovery helped me to understand where my passions lie and how to best express my spirit: through music. The MES program gave me the platform to openly explore my interests and abilities in musical expression by researching the instrument of my ancestral home, the steelpan - colloquially known as "pan".

Along the way, I started investigating the history of carnival as well as the birth and evolution of popular music in Trinidad and the diaspora; calypso, steelpan and soca. From their inception, these were influential musical forms that empowered people to overcome oppressive British rule, and they are emblematic of the decolonization movement in Trinidad and Tobago:

[...] the birth and the development of Trinidad and Tobago's popular music, of Carnival music in particular, is strictly connected to resistance to European colonization, and it also was among the fundamental bases for the birth and the development of Trinbagonian

identity. Music in Trinidad has in fact represented not only the expression of the thoughts of a nation, but something to fight for, and a fundamental weapon for the fight against colonialism, and for a new national identity. (Sofo, 2013, p. 24)

Playing pan, dressing up for carnival and singing and dancing to calypso and soca music have helped unify the people in Trinidad, and during the period leading up to and including Carnival Monday and Tuesday, they continue to experience a kind of collective interconnection; a type of *communitas*. I became fascinated by this idea of *communitas* and its different variations (*spontaneous*, *ideological* and *normative*). *Ideological Communitas* is the theoretical underpinning that tries to explain the elements that give rise to moments of *spontaneous communitas* (Turner, 1982, p. 47; Madison, p. 175) while *normative communitas* are interested in how “subcultures and groups” try to establish conditions of *spontaneous communitas* as part of the everyday. (Turner, p. 47; Madison, p. 175)

I also started to look at the relationships between art-making practices and theories of participation, including *musicking*, flow theory, and Charles Keil’s theory of participatory discrepancies (see below). The term *Musicking*, coined by Christopher Small, means “[...] to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing.” (Small, 1998, p. 9) It is a term that, being a verb instead of a noun for “music”, reinforces music as a participatory activity rather than as something to be merely “consumed”. For many scholars, this shift in perspective has profound consequences on the whole notion of community building through music making,

or musicking. Flow theory, developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, looks at the feeling of “being in the zone” that a person experiences when they are fully engaged with an activity, and links it with the ways in which art and music help people to feel more self-integrated. (Turino, p. 4; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; 1990)

Keil’s theory of participatory discrepancies attempts to describe how the tiny variations in “timing, tuning, and timbre” that occur between musicians during participatory music making relate to the “feeling of a song, its groove, its ‘vital energy,’ its capacity to create emotion.” (Mark, 2015, p. 69; Keil, 1987) It can be seen as a complement to Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory as applied to individuals, using the lens of musicking to take flow to a participatory level in creating singular instances of *spontaneous communitas*.

My overall outlook uses the *Carnavalesque* as the umbrella under which musicking, flow theory, and participatory discrepancies (PDs) fall. Crucially, all of these theories relate to “pan” because the more I researched the pan community, the more excited I became as I routinely encountered real life elements of flow theory, PDs, and spontaneous and normative communitas in the everyday experiences of panyards in Trinidad and in Toronto.

As I pondered how all of this related to the environment, I discovered that in order to find harmony within society’s chaotic external environment, I needed to first find harmony within my own internal environment. If I once reintegrated myself and found internal harmony, I would automatically have a positive influence on my external environment. I believe that practicing music in community and connecting to my cultural heritage has afforded me greater

moments of inner and outer harmony; moments that I would describe in terms of peaceful clarity with a near or complete absence of conflict. Although I use the word harmony, it could easily be substituted with the word love. Jiddu Krishnamurti defines love as a state of being that is completely free from conflict. (Krishnamurti, 1984) In an interview with Michael Toms, Krishnamurti emphasizes that internal conflict is the root cause of external conflict present in society:

I think one has to go into it, not where it begins but rather what is conflict, not only externally but also inwardly. Psychologically it is far more important to understand the nature of conflict, rather than the outward conflict. After all the outward conflict is the result of our... of the society which human beings have created, with all the immorality, with all the corruption, and the monstrous things that are happening in society – human beings have created it. It is not the result of some divine structure. So unless we understand ourselves very deeply, and understand the nature and structure of conflict, merely trying to organise a state where there is no conflict, or minimize conflict, seems rather vain and not go into it very deeply. (Krishnamurti, 1984)

When I reached the research design stages of my MES, it became increasingly clear to me that I needed to go inward to heal before knowing how to help heal the chaos of the collective, external environment. This was a great discovery for me and it became an exercise in looking at ways to cultivate the (self)love that Krishnamurti describes. I became interested in embodying the axiom that if I loved myself then it would be easier to love others, build community and find harmony in the external human and non-human environment.

As I started this practice of (self)love, I wanted to share it with others, just as pan players want to share their feelings of love and community. Inspired by

Peter Timmerman's *Environmental Music Collective* at FES, and the readings of Chris Small and Charles Keil, I started a music collective of fellow students in the MES program; each possessing varying degrees of musical experience. Dubbed the *Retro Electro Music Collective*, we approached musicking with a collaborative, intuitive, flow-based approach. We (co)learned to express ourselves, build community and connect on a deep level through musical *communitas*.

1.1 Research Goals and Methodology

My research goals were to gain insight into how musicking, when rooted in the *carnavalesque*, leads to the (re)integration of the self, and builds community. I took a multi-methods approach to qualitative research; it consisted of a literature review, participant observation, in-person and written interviews, reflection journals, storytelling and auto-ethnography. Over the course of the MES experience, I developed my approach to musicking as a research method; recognizing that the literature on musicking is about knowledge creation, I have tried out a mode of musicking combined with storytelling as a way of creating knowledge.

In this paper, I will start by presenting in more detail some of the theories mentioned above in order to give perspective on knowledge around musicking, participation and community. I will then go on to look at the steelpan from two perspectives: 1) What characteristics make the pan an ideal instrument to quickly achieve flow and 2) The role of the steelband community in carnival and its broader implications in helping individuals and communities experience the

(re)integration of the self. I will follow that up by exploring how musicking, pan and the carnivalesque translate in contexts outside of the panyard in the Canadian diaspora. I am going to do that by discussing the work of Toronto-based community artist, Joy Lapps, who teaches pan from a community arts perspective. Finally, I'll take a personal look at how I put the themes and spirit of musicking, pan, and the carnivalesque into praxis; the *retro-electro music collective* and an auto-ethnographic storytelling performance piece.

In peering into these processes, I was curious to see how these experiences help people to feel fulfilled and how they articulate being part of something bigger than themselves. In a narrower sense, I wanted to better understand 1) how the experience of the pan community works and 2) what people learned about themselves and community in the *retro electro music collective*. In both cases, I wanted to explore how playing music with others enriches lives. My final performance piece, titled *Carnivallissima, Carnival is Me*, personalizes these themes and provides an autobiographical, audiovisual account of my journey of the last few years towards self-integration. Combining my own story with those of others bridged my auto-ethnographic method with my participatory, community-based methodology. By structuring it this way, the results of the research are relevant to both individuals seeking to understand themselves better and to groups understanding music and its role in community building.

My research on pan was conducted in 2015-2016. In the summer of 2015, I became exposed to the pan and its many facets around musicking and

community when I attended the first major *International Conference on Pan* in Trinidad. I later spent 3 weeks in Trinidad and Tobago in February and March of 2016. While there, I carried out interviews, attended the National steelpan finals, known as *Panorama*, and participated in *J'ouvert*, the opening procession that takes place in the early morning of Carnival Monday. I spent Carnival Tuesday observing the masqueraders as they arrived in procession to the Queen's park savannah, in the heart of Port of Spain. My reflections on these events can be found in Appendix 1 of this paper. In July 2016, I spent 1-3 days/week at the panyard of a Toronto-based steelband, *Pan Fantasy*. There I had the opportunity to play a bit of the pan while the band prepared their musical performance for *Pan Alive*, the final steelband competition that launched the Toronto Caribbean Carnival Festival, *Caribana*.

1.1.1 Interviews

I interviewed four pan players for my research; two in Trinidad (Ronald "Ronnie" Mohammed and Johann Michael Chuckaree) and two in Canada (Darien Hafiz and Joy Lapps). Throughout the text, I will identify the interviewees by their first names in keeping with the outgoing and friendly spirit of the pan community. I also sent a questionnaire via email to all the members of the retro electro music collective to get their perspective on what they learned from the experience. Details of the interviews can be found at the end of this paper.

1.2 Broader Scope

My research on the (re)integration of the self is also largely metaphoric; it is a return to personal and communal ecological harmony through musicking. I

wanted to peer into the process of what sparks the initial interest in music and include the perspective of those who don't traditionally identify as musicians; how that shapes a person's overall outlook, and how culture and community nurtures that sense of self. This story was partially auto-ethnographic; I was interested in looking at my personal journey of overcoming years of self-doubt that was infused into me through our culture of individualism and professionalism. By turning towards my own inner voice, I found community in my heritage, pan, the *carnavalesque* and my personal circle of friends, which manifested in the *retro-electro music collective*. Widening the scope, I wanted to know the ways in which people can bring out the music in every single member of a community and harness the joy that music brings to everyone. How can we best wash away all the fears, inhibitions, paralyzing traumas and layers of self-doubt that we all carry like unwanted baggage? My theme is music, but I offer this humbly to be part of a larger movement, to bring out all of the dreams, desires, and loving creativity that we all possess, and have it grow and fuse with the source of creativity, our inner nature.

There is no doubt that music is a great structural beam for this movement, both as a playful activity to be enjoyed by everyone universally but also metaphorically, unlocking our inner music, be it filmmaking, painting, or sport. I believe it must be done with humility, love and as much as possible, fully immersed in our natural environment; as there is no difference between nature and us. We are the same as we peer into the reflection of a stream; we look at the water, and the water is looking at us! When we see the stars in the sky, and

close our eyes, the stars come to us, call to us; they are waiting to share their ancient wisdom. This deep understanding between the integrated self and nature is also a personal form of *spontaneous communitas*, where there is no hierarchy, no distinction between oneself and the land, trees, animals or stars that have entered our consciousness at that particular moment. It is akin to the beauty of a singular moment of participatory discrepancies.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Possible vs the Actual and Cultural Becoming

The social structure in modern society is grossly unbalanced: it produces compartmentalized individuals with compartmentalized minds. It produces individuals who aren't able to realize their potential, because they are disconnected from themselves, and from one another. Sadly, as Benjamin Disraeli said "most people die with their music still locked up inside them." (Moeller, 2001, p. 257) The results of that imprisoned natural creativity are devastating; life on this planet is in very real danger of extinction, we are literally devouring ourselves, our undisciplined minds are creating chaotic external realities, and rapidly deteriorating socio-cultural, and physical environments.

To create, dream, imagine, make the unthought-of (invisible) visible, is essential for society to break out of its destructive mind and thought dominant cycle. Thought and intellectual processes are important of course, especially from a practical standpoint. But I believe a balance is always the way to seek, it should be a spectrum of structure and creativity, not binary.

I liken this balance to what Turino terms *the Possible vs. the Actual*, a theory put forth by his friend James Lea. (Turino 2008; Lea, 2001) According to Lea, the *Actual* are our structured, habitual lives, in which the choices we make are largely determined by the social groups or societies to which we belong; "[...] these shared habits of thought and action and our repertoires of choices are what anthropologists generally refer to as culture." (Turino 2008, p. 17) This perspective of culture has practical significance, and gives us a structure that

makes day to day living possible, from what to eat to the clothes we're going to wear. (Turino 2008, p. 17) In order to avoid stagnation, life must also include a healthy dose of the *Possible*, consisting of "[...] dreams, hopes, desires, ideals: these are the elements of life that add dynamism and challenge and that make us want to keep living." (Turino, 2008, p. 17) Individuals need a balance between both *the Possible and the Actual* in order to stay grounded and not get overwhelmed, while imagining new possibilities and envisioning a more cohesive society.

The arts are crucial for restoring this imbalance. "The arts are founded on the interplay between the Possible and the Actual and can awaken us from habit." (Turino, 2008, p. 17) I'm intrigued by the use of the word "awaken" by Turino; "awaken us from habit". It's very accurate and fitting, because collectively, society is very much asleep and locked into habits of self-doubt and disconnection. In our current cultural state, this keeps us devoid of the Possible; of collective dreams, fantasy, hope and joy. Those sleeping are in a tremendous need of an awakening, to allow new possibilities to blossom from more fluid, dynamic frameworks.

Where do I personally situate art and music to break away from our habitual prisons? I turn here to the realm of performance art. Somewhat of a parallel to Turino's reference to the "interplay between the Possible and the Actual", Victor Turner introduces the theory of performance as being born from constantly changing processes of culture. (Madison, 2012, p. 172; Turner, 1982) For Turner, culture is not something static or complete, but is always flowing,

ever changing; “[...] in constant creation, definition, and reflection of itself (Madison, 2012; Turner, 1985, p. 203). Victor states that this “cultural becoming” is formed through shifting phases of *structure* and *antistructure*. *Structure* is defined as “order within systems” (Turner, 1982, p. 36) and is linked to conserving culture, while *antistructure* leads to cultural growth. (Madison, p. 173; Turner, p. 114)

Like the *Actual* that Turino mentions, structure can provide security and safety for all who belong to a cultural group. (Madison, p. 173) However, too much structure can also limit and segregate people, by focusing on their differences rather than their commonalities. (Turner, 1982, p. 47) As Soyini Madison remarks, for Victor, structure is very much associated with rigidity, law, and a sense of duty. (Madison, p. 173):

In people’s social structural relationships they are by various abstract processes generalized and segmented into roles, statuses, classes, cultural sexes, conventional age-divisions, ethnic affiliations, etc. In different types of social situations they have been conditioned to play specific social roles. It does not matter how well or how badly as long as they “make like” they are obedient to the norm-sets that control different compartments of the complex model known as the “social structure.” (Turner 1982, p. 46)

Alternatively, Turner states that *antistructure* is the “dissolution of normative social structure, with its role-sets, statuses, jural rights and duties” (Turner 1982, p. 28). Turner drew his influence from the anthropologist Brian Sutton-Smith, who discusses the idea of normative structure as the “working equilibrium” while *antistructure* “represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it.” (Sutton-Smith, 1972, p. 18-19) For Sutton-Smith, *antistructure*

is the “precursor of innovative normative forms” and the “source of new culture.”
(pp. 18-19)

2.2 The Arts and the (Re)Integration of the Self

If we consider that on the whole, we are all disconnected from each other and our environment, then it starts with being disconnected with our inner selves, our internal environment. Philosophers like Krishnamurti have stressed that our external environment is a direct reflection of our inner environment; in physical, psychological and spiritual manifestations. Some scholars are proponents of the idea that art and music are integral to helping each of us identify those disconnected fragments of our inner environment and bring them back together to become whole internally. (Bateson, 1972; Turino, 2008) The key appears to be in the modes of communication that the arts possess that are beyond the realm of rational thought. For Gregory Bateson, the arts have “[...] an integrative function – integrating and uniting the members of social groups but also integrating individual selves, and selves with the world.” (Bateson, 1972; Turino, 2008, p. 3)

Bateson’s work is concerned with cultivating the buried subconscious and bringing it to light within conscious awareness. What makes the arts particularly effective is that elements of the subconscious are revealed through what Bateson terms “*primary process*”, whereby creative “manipulation of artistic materials” makes it possible to perceive the imagery and ideas that emerge from the subconscious in a clearer form, free from the often distorting filters of “rational” or symbolic interpretation. (Bateson, 1972; Turino, p. 3, 237) Connective in nature,

primary process allows us to establish the relationships between the images and ideas that would often seem unrelated from a purely “rational” standpoint.

(Bateson, 1972, Turino, p. 3) According to Bateson, artistic flow is expressed in forms and patterns that connect the collective imagery, feelings and experience of an individual that are “both the result of and articulate this integration of different parts of the self and thus facilitate wholeness”. (Bateson, 1972; Turino, p. 4)

By integrating the different parts of the self as represented in corresponding artistic forms and patterns, one can uncover the previously hidden fragments, understand them and how they relate, and bring the newly “connective inner life” in balance with “reason’, sensitivity, and sense.” This reintegration of the self makes a person profoundly grounded and integrated -- whole --, and for Bateson, it is essential for “experiencing deep connections with others and with the environment, which is crucial for social and ecological survival.” (Bateson, 1972; Turino, p. 4) This can feel like inner joy and inspiration; the result from once stagnant energy flowing through someone more freely.

In effect, art and music are ways to simultaneously look at and understand ourselves, which strengthens our ability to understand others, both human and non-human. I would also say that by understanding and knowing ourselves, we potentially learn to love ourselves. If we love ourselves, we can by extension love others, and our environment. This self-love and inter-connection with our wider community is a manifestation of Turner’s *antistructure*, the source of a new culture, and a new way of relating to our selves and our world. As I previously

mentioned, new culture forms through the tensions of *structure* (hierarchy, security) and *antistructure* (potential alternatives). For me, an essential component of developing this new source of culture into a more normative structure is to connect with one's sense of place - essentially, the land and culture from which one originates.

2.3 Carnival

In my journey of self-discovery, I find joy when I encounter a visceral alignment with my cultural heritage and the transformational power of carnival. In fact, the historical development of carnival, calypso and steelpan in Trinidad and the diaspora could be considered model examples of the fascinating, at times even violent interplay between *structure* and *antistructure*, control and creativity. There is no doubting the power of carnival as a revolutionary liminal space. Over the last 50-100 years, carnival has expanded massively on a global scale, with Caribbean-based carnivals flourishing in the diaspora. Most notable among them are *Notting Hill* in London, *Caribana* in Toronto, and *Labour Day* in New York. (Nurse, 1999, p. 1)

From the outside, carnival may seem simply a colourful and artistic street party where people just want to have a good time. While celebration and fun are definitely a core part of the carnival experience, its history reveals a strong undercurrent of resistance. This revolutionary spirit, a manifestation of Turner's *antistructure*, has embodied the role of the carnival festivals in the diaspora.

Carnival as a cultural activity is not just about merriment, colourful pageantry, revelry and street theatre. Carnival is born out of the struggle of marginalized peoples to shape a cultural identity through resistance, liberation and catharsis. It is these values that have facilitated its

replication wherever the Caribbean diaspora is found. (Nurse, 1999, p. 662)

I believe these liminal characteristics of Carnival, of which calypso, soca music and pan are an integral part, make it an ideal model for the integration of the self. This was not only true for myself as a Trinidadian-Canadian, but the Trinidad Carnival and the overseas variants have tremendous drawing power for many, as evidenced in their status as a major cultural and economic phenomenon. In fact, in many major cities across Britain and North America (including the aforementioned London, Toronto and New York) the Caribbean carnivals create the most revenue economically and boast the highest attendance of any other festival in their respective regions. (Nurse, 1999) As Frank Manning states, these Caribbean festivals make a strong case for being 'the world's most popular transnational celebration' (Manning, 1990: 36; Nurse, 1999)

To frame my personal reintegration, I will briefly touch on the origins of Carnival and move on to its historical development in Trinidad. The word Carnival derives from *carnivale* in Latin, which is translated as 'farewell to the flesh', denoting a time for pleasure, and overt physical and sexual expression through modes of music, dance and feasting. (Nurse, 1999, p. 664). The carnival spirit is also quite universal across cultures, notably among them many African and Asian spring and harvest festivals that existed before the time of colonization from Europe. (Nurse, 1999, p. 664)

Originally, Carnival in Europe was a combination of different pagan rituals that held the common theme of over-turning and celebrating social opposites to norms (Shohat and Stam, 1994, p. 302; Nurse 1999, p. 664). Some of those

were the spring or harvest-time Greek *Dionysian* festivals that honoured Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, excess and sensuality. (Martinez and Aldana, 1994, p. 26) Another festival found throughout the Roman Empire, the *Saturnalia*, involved the loosening of general rules and reversals of social roles. (Cowley, 1991, p. 1; Nurse, 2004, p. 664) While these early festivals were generally a time for pleasure and celebration following the long winter period, the advent of early Christianity brought a change in perspective to one of enjoyment before a period of self-denial and restraint.

Accordingly it is argued that 'early Christianity found pagan Rome full of Saturnalia and other Carnival-like activity and accommodated it by defining the season for its exercise, and by relating it to the need, in a proselytizing religion, for abstinence and penitence' (Bishop, 1991: 7). Carnival therefore evolved to become the 'last fling' before the Lenten period in the Christian calendar. Hence the culmination of seasonal carnival activities on Shrove Tuesday, when sins are shriven or confessed. (Nurse, 2004, p. 664)

Moving forward to medieval Europe, Carnival cemented itself as a meeting ground for the contrasting dynamics between "the top-down moral and political order and the popular classes." (Armstrong, 2010, p. 447) According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the popular classes used Carnival as a symbolic space to simultaneously express their frustration and placation of the existing socio-political order, as well as to embrace spiritual concepts that were not accepted by the Church. (Armstrong, 2010) This was done in an artistic way through "Mimicry, parody, satire, role reversals and symbolic social inversion" to work out the harsh realities of marginalization along class, racial and gender lines. (Nurse, 1999)

For Bakhtin, the end result of combining opposing themes of 'order and subversion' creates a paradigm in which these contrasting elements are fused

into “an organic whole” where “the society is able to symbolically purge its demons and renew and restore itself, ultimately preserving the synergy between contrastive energies” (Armstrong, 2010, p. 448; Hirschkop, 1999)

This fusing and symbolic reshaping of contrasting elements within the Carnival sphere can be theoretically understood as various forms of *liminality*. (Armstrong, p. 450) Turner describes *liminality* as the ‘state of being betwixt and between structures or situations.’ (Turner, 1982a, 1982b, 1985; Madison, p.174) Within Carnival, there is a suspension of daily life and all its corresponding laws and rigid structures, allowing creativity and spontaneity to flow more freely. The end result is that Carnival becomes “the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new form of interrelationships between individuals, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life” (Carlson, 1996, p 28; Madison, 2012, p. 175) Of course, these new forms of interrelationships are only made possible through the fusing of both the realities of everyday life and the creative, they go hand and hand. According to Turner, since *liminality* is a state of being on the boundaries of systems (Madison, 2012, p. 174), it is ideal for reflecting on each system without being rooted in one or the other. (Turner, 1982a) This is (potentially) revolutionary; Carnival allows us to examine our society and our place in it in such a way that together we can release and share strong or repressed emotions and desires with others to combine new collective realities.

2.3.1 Trinidad Carnival

The roots of Carnival in Trinidad are a direct reflection of the multicultural and often violent history of colonization of the island. Although the first peoples of Trinidad and Tobago were the Arawaks and Caribs, the cultural make up of these islands would change dramatically from the time of the Spanish colonizers in 1498. For almost three hundred years, Trinidad had a very small population that consisted of Spanish settlers and indigenous peoples. (Nurse, 1999) In 1783, an attempt to exploit the territory further resulted in the ruling Spanish encouraging settlers to come to Trinidad and Tobago by offering land and tax-related benefits. Most of those that came to the island were planters of French creole origin, as well as slaves from other islands in the French West Indies. (Nurse, 1999) In addition, there were migrants from other places such as Africa, Venezuela, North America, and islands belonging to the British West Indies. (Nurse, 1999; Brown, 1990) The result was a dramatic increase in population that reflects much of the multicultural makeup of Trinidad that exists today. Sadly, by the early 1800s, the indigenous population had almost entirely disappeared. (Brown, 1990) Following the emancipation of African slaves between 1834-1838, there was a final major wave of migration, with the arrival of indentured labourers from India, who were brought to work in the plantations after the freed Africans left. (Nurse, 1999; Brown, 1990) The rest of Trinidad's ethnic makeup consisted of migrants from China, and towards the end of the 1800s, some Syrian and Lebanese migrants who came to Trinidad. (Nurse, 1999)

Originally brought to the island by the French planters in the late 18th century, Carnival would undergo a deep transformation from the time of emancipation:

The emancipation in 1838 of the majority of Trinidad's population, the African slaves changed the country's cultural life forever. No longer confined by slavery, the creativity of the Africans blossomed. They expropriated Carnival, transforming it to express their aesthetic and ethical sensibilities. Carnival became a raucous street party, enlivened by African drumming and ribald masquerades mocking Trinidad's rulers. (Brown, 1990, p.85)

Music, dance and singing became major mediums of expression in the form of *kalinda* bands. This was best reflected in the *chantwell*, singers who were leaders of the *kalinda* bands and from which later came calypso (Sofa, 2013). Over the course of the 19th century, there were several attempts by the British to suppress the *kalinda* rituals and the drumming that was associated with it, mainly due to fear of their transformational power. (Sofa, 2013)

The banning of drumming changed the sound of Carnival and led to the innovative creation of the tamboo bamboo, an instrument made from a bamboo cane that made a similar sound to drums when hit on the ground, only softer. Different sounds and tones could be produced by making bamboo canes of different lengths, allowing for the creation of small bands to play together. Eventually, percussion bands began to experiment with different types of discarded metal (such as paint cans, biscuit tins and eventually, oil drums) and mold them into musical instruments. These developments would lead to the replacement of the tamboo bamboo with the first steelbands around the 1930s. (Brown, 1990; Sofa, 2013) Like their predecessors, dating back to the *kalinda* (and tamboo bamboo) bands, the early steelbands were both aesthetically and

morally offensive to the British colonialists. (Brown, 1990) However, between the late 1940s and late 1950s, there was a gradual shift in attitude that began to embrace the pan and the movement as a viable indigenous culture. This was especially apparent among the middle classes who “began to realize that, in order to lead their nation to independence and assume power afterwards, it was necessary that they appear to identify with the culture of the common people.” (Brown, 1990, p.94) This wave of acceptance meant that the steelpan and the steelband movement became an integral part of the cultural and political shift towards decolonization that culminated in independence for Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. (Soho, 2013)

Over the ensuing years, the pan cemented itself as a national art symbol and with this new status came a shift away from the grassroots community-based model in favour of a more formalized context. This has primarily been done via *Panorama*, the annual music competition of steelbands held every year since 1963 on the eve of Carnival. Balancing the benefits and perils of adjudicated competition with the essence of the steelband movement has had its ebbs and flows since the early sixties, and Shannon Dudley succinctly describes the historical essence of the steelpan movement and the challenges facing it today:

Thanks to the creativity of young musicians, the support of their communities, and the work of well-connected people who were receptive to its possibilities, the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago became an arena for the coming together of the high and low, local and foreign, presentation and participation. In this way it created space in the national dialogue for people who did not presume to control their world but who engaged life with a spirit of striving and play. As the steel band movement today assumes broader responsibilities, its challenge is to hold onto that spirit. (Dudley, 2008, p.274)

2.4 Participation and Participatory Discrepancies

What makes the experience of making music together so special goes far beyond the analytical mind and the western-centric model of structure.

Organization is important of course, but a group of musicologists believe the magical emotional elements emerge from process; from the act of making music itself.

In ethnomusicology circles, as mentioned above, Charles Keil is known for his ground-breaking theory of participatory discrepancies, or PDs for short.

Andrew Mark has done excellent work capturing the essence of Keil's theory in his PhD dissertation *What is Music For? Utopian Ecomusicologies and Musicking*

Hornby Island. (Mark, 2015) PDs are a theoretical model to account for the

emotion that is felt from the energy or groove of a song. (Mark, 2015, p. 68, 69)

The theory of PDs looks at how musicians communicate musically by constantly dialoguing (over time) the "micro variations in timing, tuning, and timbre" that make up a groove. (Mark, 2015)

When Keil wrote *Motion and Feeling in Music* in 1966, he was motivated by the view that feeling and emotion in music stems from process. This was in response to a theory put forth by Leonard Meyer in an article titled *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, in which Meyer, coming primarily from a Western arts music perspective, posits that emotion is generated through structure and the musical object. (Mark, 2015; Meyer, 1956)

In his article *The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: a Progress Report*, Keil rejects Meyer's views and states that process takes precedence over structure in the act of music.

[...] music is not about structure at all. Music is about process, not product, it's not about serious and practice in deferring gratification but play and pleasure (French 1985) that we humans need from it; "groove" or "vital drive" is not some essence of all music that we can simply take for granted, but must be figured out each time between players; music is not so much about abstract emotions and meanings, reason, cause and effect, logic, but rather about motions, dance, global and contradictory feelings; it's not about composers bringing forms from on high for mere mortals to realize or approximate, it's about getting down and into the groove, everyone creating socially from the bottom up. (Keil, 1995, p.1)

Keil's theory is focused from the ground up; PDs explicitly focus on the driving force for groove between different players, and Keil offers insight into the power of the "unconscious in creating PDs for groove." (Mark, 2015, p 71) Keil often talks about the experience of a drummer and bassist playing together as a concrete example of his theory in action. (Mark, 2015, p. 71) When a drummer and bassist play together, there are moments when they strike a note at the downbeat, an accentuated beat. As they play together, the drummer and the bassist are not going to be playing the respective notes at exactly the same time, but rather there will almost always be a slight milliseconds difference between when they produce their sound. Over the course of a few bars or a song, there is an evolving interplay of micro timing, and the drummer and bassist will often take turns "driving the beat", depending how they're playing the notes in relation to each other. (Mark, 2015) These changes over time can be scaled up from an individual musician to entire bands and give a song its infectious energy or "groove":

It is the little discrepancies within a jazz drummer's beat, between bass and drums, between rhythm section and soloists that create "swing" and invite us to participate. (Keil, 1987, p. 277)

These negotiations of changes are an ongoing dialogue where "[...] the bassist and drummer do not actually keep perfect time by landing with mathematical precision, but rather, create perfect time by conversing about where the time might be." (Mark, 2015, p. 71) The perfection is in the process of "imperfection", playing with those differences, communicating in the moment, creating groove.

It seems to me that Keil was motivated to develop his theory of PDs as more than just a response to Meyer's views; it was a rallying cry underlined by his deep concern for our disconnection with each other and our environment, in which he quite rightly feels participation is key to re-establishing this connection.

All humans were participants once upon a time, but I believe we still experience music and perhaps some other portions of reality this way. I also believe we need more of a participatory consciousness if we are to get back into ecological synchrony with ourselves and with the natural world. (Keil, 1987, p. 276)

Meyer, on the other hand, subscribes to a worldview that encourages individuality and passivity. This is evidence that even within the realm of art and music, the capitalistic hegemonic model tends to see art as a primarily individual pursuit and positions music as a lifeless abstraction rather than something to be directly experienced, which further reinforces these ideas of separation and passivity. As Hans-Georg Gadamer writes;

Insistence on the opposition between life and art is tied to the experience of an alienated world. And failure to recognize the universal scope and ontological dignity of play produces an abstraction that blinds us to the interdependence of both. (Gadamer, H., 1986; Feld, 1988, p.74)

The ethnomusicologist Christopher Small addressed this western concept of

music as an abstraction, and how this separation leads to a hierarchy of elitism that allows the composer and professional musicians to be the only ones who have the ability to create or reproduce music, and downplays the role of the listeners, whose only task is to listen passively with their minds, never expecting to be able to participate themselves, i.e. music is a realm apart and exclusive. (Small, 1999) He discusses the ingrained tendency in Western culture to privilege the musical work over the act of performing itself, tracing this lineage to at least the times of ancient Greece. Small goes on to state that this privileging of the musical text over performance has caused a misinterpretation of the nature and meaning of music and people's ability to experience it. "For it is not true that performance takes place in order to present a musical work; it is the other way around. Musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform." (Small, 1999) Small also highlights the pervasive and detrimental tendency of Western thought to dominate all other worldviews, and looks at how it illegitimizes other cultures; "[...] there is a strong tendency to work more or less exclusively within the assumptions of the Western high-art tradition and to accept them without question as universals of music." (Small, 1999)

Here it becomes easy to understand where Meyer is coming from; he is simply echoing the assumptions that are part and parcel of a capitalistic society. In modern societies such as ours, there has been an erosion of participatory values which, in the music world, can be directly linked to the rise of the music industry over the last century; "If we briefly consider the products of the music industry over time, we can glimpse cosmopolitans' gradual shift in thinking of

music making as a social activity to music as an object.” (Turino, 2008, p. 24)

Why is the philosophy behind any musical endeavour important? How does looking at music as a serious profession and a commodity contribute to social isolation in modern society? If the approach we have been conditioned to believe growing up is inaccurate, then what is music for?

Small is among a group of scholars who have spent a lot of time pondering the purpose of music and examining its role in creating and sustaining community. “For more years than I care to think about I have been worrying away at the question, or rather, a pair of questions: “What is the nature of music?” and “What is the function of music in human life?”— in the life, that is, of every single member of the human species?” (Small, 1999, p.9)

Keil’s theory of PDs is a major stepping-stone that offers insight into the nature of music. PDs capture the shared joy of a particular moment between two or more individuals playing together that can be scaled up to an entire band with an audience who may or may not be dancing. It’s a living breathing metaphor of Victor’s *spontaneous communitas*. But as Victor states, these temporary state of creativity, the *antistructure of communitas*, while magical and perhaps essential ingredients for social harmony, are ephemeral; structure and hierarchy are re-established. (Madison, 2012, p. 175) Madison discusses Victor’s three distinct levels of *communitas* which attempt to progress from a fleeting experience to something more permanent and with revolutionary potential for social change; *spontaneous communitas*, *ideological communitas*, and *normative communitas*.

Spontaneous *communitas* is a deep, direct, immediate, and total personal interaction that “has something magical about it” (Turner, 1982, p. 47). Ideological *communitas* is “a set of theoretical concepts which attempt to describe the interactions of spontaneous *communitas*” (p. 47). It is the search, “the centering of attention” on articulating and re-creating the nature of the magic. Normative *communitas* is “a subculture or group which attempts to foster and maintain relationships of spontaneous *communitas* on a more or less permanent basis” (p. 47). (Madison, 2012, p. 175; Turner, 1982)

Keil’s PDs seem to be a solid framework of *ideological communitas* that expresses the magic of *spontaneous communitas*. This theory glows with light and has a heart-felt sincerity to it; Keil is concerned with participation, process, nature and humanity. There has been much discussion and in some cases criticism of Keil’s PDs to adequately approach the sphere of *normative communitas*, the level associated with social change, community and environment, or to the ecological synchrony to which Keil aspires. (Mark, 2015)

For the purposes of my research however, it is sufficient to fit PDs into the overall schema as a mechanism towards connecting people on a participatory level during the act of making music together.

2.5 Flow Theory

Keil’s PDs explain a singular moment of timelessness between two or more players, achieving a sense of togetherness, something greater than the sum of its parts. It is interesting to look at an activity itself and the effect it has on an individual, before looking outward to a pair or group sharing an activity.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has a theory called *flow* or *optimal experience* that helps to give concrete structure to Bateson’s hypothesis that the arts develop a wholeness of the self. (Csikszentmihalyi , 1988, 1990; Turino, p.

4) Flow is defined as “a state of heightened concentration, when one is so intent on the activity at hand that all other thoughts, concerns, and distractions disappear and the actor is fully in the present.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990; Turino, 2008)

Despite the intensity of some of the activities researched by Csikszentmihalyi, such as mountain climbing or kayaking, people reported that flow experiences were in fact “restful” and “liberating”; by keeping fully focused on the activity being performed, there was no opportunity to dwell on personal problems or worries, resulting in a “clear, open state of mind.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990; Turino, 2008 p. 4) Csikszentmihalyi argues that this open state of clarity is integral to “psychic growth and integration.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990; Turino, 2008) Turino points out that flow states are quite familiar and that on average, people can relate to being so engrossed in an activity that they feel a temporary sense of timelessness. Csikszentmihalyi’s research is valuable in that it identifies the key aspects of certain activities that make them ideal to experiencing flow. (Turino, 2008, p. 4)

Music, games, sports and dance are perfect activities that harbour a balanced mix of the necessary conditions to experience flow. In my interviews with members of the pan community, in the field of musical instruments and their corresponding culture embedded in the *carnavalesque*, I discovered that the pan is an excellent instrument for attaining flow. While other instruments and the formation of musical groups and training are certainly good places for accessing these states, I would argue that the pan is an ideal vehicle for achieving flow, and

its particular strength lies in helping people of all ages, including those that wouldn't consider themselves musicians, or who may have a fear or "block", to experience psychic wholeness by playing music, where they may have previously thought impossible.

In his research, Csikszentmihalyi outlined 5 conditions that taken together should make a given activity ideal for achieving a flow state. 1) The level of skill of the actor and the associated challenge of the activity must be well balanced so as to avoid excessive boredom or frustration. If the balance is right, the participant will find the experience pleasurable and is more likely to continue performing the activity. 2) The balance between the actor's skill level and the challenge of the activity must be scalable; there should be "a continually expanding ceiling for potential challenges" present in the activity for the actor to grow in skill. 3) The activity should be good at providing instantaneous feedback so the participant is aware of their progress, making them more likely to be mentally engaged during the time they're engaged in the activity. 4) In order to minimize distractions of everyday life and for the participants to be fully present, the activity must be performed within a well-defined boundary of time and place. 5) Lastly, there should be clear and easily defined goals that are reasonable to achieve in the context of the bounded time and place, and according to the actor's skill level. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1990; Turino, 2008)

3. THE STEELPAN AND THE PANYARD

3.1 Pan as an instrument

Csikszentmihalyi states that the first condition to achieving a flow state is to strike a good balance between the skill level of the participant and the degree of difficulty of the activity. Many musical instruments are known to be very hard for beginners to be able to pick up and learn to play a series of notes, let alone play a song in the first session. Most instruments require some initial time learning basic techniques to properly understand how to produce a note or pattern for a melody. This can often take a few practice sessions before a beginner gets a basic grasp of the instrument and is able to play something of substance. Furthermore, it would be very difficult to get a group of beginners to play a melody or song together in the first session. The pan, on the other hand, excels at helping beginners find this balance and almost immediately tap into the electric current of flow.

The ... thing is that, steel pan being a percussive instrument meaning that you play it with mallets or with sticks right. Umm...it's very easy to grasp, in that you can teach a young person, a young child, who may have no experience whatsoever or exposure to music. Or you can teach an older person who may not...who may have been classically trained in piano. But it's easy to make that switch, it's very easy to pick up, it's very easy to...the technique is very easy to learn. Now of course when you start getting a little more complicated in terms of what you're playing it becomes difficult. But to learn the basics, it's very easy. (Chuckaree, 2016)

As Johann Chuckaree rightly points out, some of the magic lies in the inherent nature of the steelpan as a percussive instrument. However, what makes it particularly suited for flow is the fact that it's a blend of percussive (ease of use) and melodic (versatility/range), combining the benefits of both worlds.

The second condition of flow is that the activity should be scalable, with an ever-increasing degree of challenge. Here the pan shares a strength that is common to all musical instruments, and musical or art worlds in general; there is always more to master, more to explore. In the quote above, Johann referred to the complexity in technique and skill that can be reached when a person becomes more adept at playing the pan. As an example of this condition in action, Darien Hafiz, a young yet accomplished pannist who is proficient with the instrument and has won competitions with the group *Pan Fantasy*, describes how his ceiling is continuing to expand.

I've been continuously learning, I consider myself a student of the instrument. And I never wanna stop being a student of the instrument, cause I always like to think that I can get better, I can learn more, there's another avenue, there's another way to go. And I want to stay in that mind-set, I don't want to become complacent, because there's so much to offer and if I keep pushing myself, the possibilities, the places I can go, the things I can see... I'm sure they're just endless. (Hafiz, 2016)

The third condition for flow is that the activity should provide instantaneous feedback to help the participant stay engaged, focused and aware of their progress at all times. In my personal experience, this is a point in which the pan really shines because of the direct, visual set-up along with the clearly distinguishable tones of the instrument. The large spacing of the notes across the face of the pan helps to minimize mistakes when learning basic patterns; if you hit a wrong note, it is not only clear to your ears but also visually, and you can easily find the correct note which is often adjacent to the wrong note that was struck. Of course, here I would add that in the right setting, the instant gratification of playing something coherent is a type of instantaneous feedback

that serves to motivate one to keep playing and learn more. The fourth condition of flow states that the activity being performed must be clearly bound within a set time and place. Traditionally in Trinidad and the diaspora, this boundary has been found in two settings, the panyard and as part of the music arts curriculum in some schools. Beyond these settings however, there has been somewhat limited exposure of the steelpan in the diaspora, and it is still considered something of a novelty and is quite unknown to people of non-Caribbean descent, not just in terms of the pan itself but also in understanding the history and culture from which it was born. This is a particularly salient theme that I will delve into a little deeper in the following section regarding pan and community. The final condition, which builds on the fourth condition, says that within a given time and place, there should be clear and easily defined goals that are suited to the participant's skill level, be they beginner, intermediate, or proficient. Depending on the skill level of the participant, the pan is effective at meeting this condition, whether it is in the context of a panyard or a small community arts class. There are artists doing wonderful work to make pan more accessible to beginners, effectively strengthening this crucial condition for flow.

3.2 Carnival and Pan as Community

It's impossible to look at the impact of pan in creating community without situating it in the *carnavalesque*, whose spirit is embodied in carnival.

In Trinidad, everything revolves around Carnival and the lead up to it, which is both a time for community spirit and strong entrepreneurship. For the pan community, this buildup is reflected in the preparations leading up to and

including the prestigious steelband competition known as *Panorama*, held on the Saturday just before Carnival Monday and Tuesday. *Panorama* involves competitive categories based on the size of the steelbands, from small bands to large bands, and is an intimate piece of the carnival spirit that is tightly woven into the identity of being Trinidadian.

Over the last half-century, *Panorama*, and carnival as a whole, have moved towards a more formalized, presentational mode of performance, which creates some challenges for carnivalesque practices that have roots in a highly participatory community setting. (Dudley, 2003, p. 17) There is some debate on the benefits and drawbacks of having a competition like *Panorama*, which some fear often favours the larger bands in prize money and cachet. (Dudley, 1997; Dudley, 2003, p. 12) In addition, detractors often feel that by focusing too much on organized competition, *Panorama* takes away from the community spirit and restricts the creativity of the bands to put together the final piece. (Dudley, 2003)

Some have made counterarguments -- that within this structure, creativity is still assured as band arrangers are constantly finding new sources of innovation and drawing upon a variety of musical genres and styles in composing their tunes for *Panorama*. (Dudley, 2003) Furthermore, during the performances, judges often rely on the enthusiasm and degree of favourable response of the audience towards the bands as a way to determine their rankings. Thus, in this way, the crowd is able to participate in the piece and the moment, which in turn drives the bands to constantly look for innovative runs and themes for their performance. (Dudley, 2003, p. 20) I attended the *Panorama* finals in February

2016 and had the chance to experience first hand the excitement and tension created from spirits of creativity and constraint that are part of an organized competition. My reflection can be read in Appendix 1.

Two of my interviewees in Trinidad were members of the band *Phase II Pan Groove*, one of the largest and most famous steelbands in Trinidad. When asked about the contrasting dynamics of *Panorama* versus the community spirit of pan, they were both of the opinion that *Panorama* is a great driving force that clearly brings people together, and fosters reciprocity.

Panorama as far as I'm concerned, is good for the community, it's good for the steelband, it gives the band something to work towards every year...when the band is preparing for the Panorama competition, the community gets involved. Let's say for example if a band is unsponsored... members in the community may come and help. There may be for example a welder in the community who may come and weld together their pan stand and their racks for them. There may be a painter in the community who may dedicate his time free of charge to come out and help them paint. (Chuckaree, 2016)

While this quote gives an excellent account of the community spirit that is found in bands of all sizes, I unfortunately didn't get a chance to interview other pannists from smaller community based bands. It would certainly be interesting to hear their opinion and how they view Panorama in the context of their overall direction of their bands. This is a theme in and of itself, and deals with a broad context with more depth than I could cover here. Coming after the *Kings and Queens* ceremony, *Panorama* is the final marquee event before the official launch of carnival, split into the opening *J'ouvert* procession at 4am Monday morning, followed by the final showcase where all the masqueraders join the showcase parade on carnival Tuesday (Refer to Appendix 1 for my first-hand

account of *J'ouvert* morning and carnival Tuesday). My experience attending carnival Tuesday was one where I saw a community that was open, inclusive and full of life and joy. Everywhere I turned, there were colourful costumes with innovative puppets and floats. Feathers, animal spirits and positive soca grooves surrounded me. People danced freely, by themselves and with each other; smiles were everywhere, which gave a feeling of good vibes.

A few days after Carnival in my interview with a pan player on the theme of carnival and pan, he highlighted the tremendous amount of effort that goes into things like preparing costumes and tuning pans, and explained the sense of identity that carnival means to the people of Trinidad:

From the people who participate in carnival, so the masqueraders, and even the pan players, the workers, it gives them a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, a sense of contributing. It also relieves you of all the stresses that you have been going through for the past year. You just feel like...it's just... this thing just lifts off your shoulder when you have climax in carnival. So without that, I think the average Trinidadian would be much more agitated if we were not to have things like carnival. We as a people, what we have to try to do, is we have to try to see how we can get that energy, that the average person who is involved in carnival, puts into carnival, to be extended into your normal day to day life, for the development of the country. (Mohammed, 2016)

The energy that Ronnie Mohammed describes was palpable in my carnival experiences; the *Panorama* final, *J'ouvert* morning, and *Carnival Tuesday*. Furthermore, this passage from Ronnie and my personal observations fit perfectly well with the theory of carnival as a three dimensional liminal space where society can cleanse and essentially push the reset button, and allow the creative energy that is released from this process to fashion a temporary world of *communitas* that promotes unity, good will and happiness.

On the need to extend carnival into the everyday life of the community, I found this to be a profound observation by Ronnie. It seems to be a reflection on the need to work towards a *normative communitas*, to weave the *carnavalesque* into the fabric of the everyday. A big part of this shift requires regular activities that are artistic and creative in nature, and ones where every individual has the opportunity to feel part of a greater whole. My personal research focus here is on the role of music and the integration of the self under the umbrella of the *carnavalesque*.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest a burgeoning sense of *normative communitas* in steelbands. My research offers some representative anecdotes and personal experience, but I know that I am barely scratching the surface, for the deeper I dig into the socio-political aspects of Trinidadian (and Caribbean) culture, the more I discover that it is tremendously vibrant and complex with many layers and interconnecting parts. If we go back to the work of *antistructure* as a latent system for potential alternatives, and apply it to the historical and contemporary development of pan in Trinidad and the diaspora, we find uplifting examples of community building work.

Particularly interesting was Johan's comments that there is an evolving trend where panyards, even those as large as *Phase II*, are becoming places of and for the community:

A panyard should be a recreational centre where the young people, the older people, the kids, everyone can come and have a good time. Everyone can come and basically have somewhere safe to go, where the kids can come and do their homework in comfort and peace. Where a young person who doesn't know how to play music, can come and learn to play the pan. Where you can have classes even for the older persons who

may not even be literate. Where they can learn a trade or they can learn basic English and basic mathematics and basic subjects like that. So, our view of the panyard right now, a lot of it is that well it's a Panyard. It's for music, it's for Panorama, it's for steelbands to practice. Yes there's some bad elements and so. But I think in the future, where the panyard's supposed to go is that community centre." (Chuckaree, 2016)

This wasn't always the case. In the early days, panyards were not as accessible to the average Trinidadian because there was a negative perception surrounding them. This was partly due to the steelbands being a form of the ongoing resistance to the drumming ban and general oppression from the ruling classes. (Brown, 1990)

During its infancy, pan faced an uphill battle that held long-standing traditions of oppression and brutality by the ruling classes. (Brown, 1990) It is known that there were clashes, as rival bands got into disputes over territory and supremacy. (Stuempfle, 1995) The result of the social stigma was that younger Trinidadians weren't allowed to go to panyards, and many missed out on accessing this instrument. Ronnie Mohammed, a veteran pan performer, illustrated this clearly when he said:

I started playing pan at a very late stage in my life. I grew up in St. James, in Trinidad... and in St. James, there were many steelbands. But, at the time of my youth and young adulthood, I could not go to a panyard because at that time, the steelband was viewed as something...not good. Only people of illicit means were really involved. And so it was basically something you would not find parents wanting their children to get involved with. (Mohammed, 2016)

The overall perception began to change when the decolonization movement gained momentum during the late 50s and 60s. Since then, panyards have become more inclusive and accessible environments that have a family-like

atmosphere, which is reflected in the role of women (and children) as important and valued members. (Dudley, 2008; Lapps, 2016) In fact, panyards are open to all people irrespective of race, gender or class. Panyards follow the underlying praxis of the *carnavalesque* spirit, which is to let “everyone and everything in.” (Lawlor, 1993, p. 3) This provides unique opportunities for people who might not usually get the chance to relate to each other under normal, everyday social conditions to come together. When discussing the dynamics of his steelband (*Phase II Pangroove*), Ronnie Mohammed states:

[in the panyard] you find a wide cross-section of folks. You find people from high society, you have judges, you have magistrates, you have doctors, you have lawyers, who are ardent supporters of the band. You also have the average Joe in the street who doesn't have a steady job...is also an ardent supporter. And they will be in the band, and you find they mingle. So, the band brings the community together, irrespective of your social background. Once you're in the band... and that common element is the steelband that bridges the gap in the community. (Mohammed, 2016)

This is a really refreshing passage because modern society tends to sharply divide people across race, class, political and gender lines. In contrast the panyard cuts through those lines and celebrates diversity; it bridges those gaps in the community and gives people an opportunity to feel more connected.

It's really a social melting pot. It's a cultural melting pot as well, where many people of many different races, of many different ... (religions, beliefs, levels of financial income, levels of intelligence, levels of skill) come together for one purpose. So it creates a sense of unity in an environment that...you know nowadays there's not much unity. So it creates unity and ... peace and it creates a group of people working towards one goal in a society that is now you know, promoting more independence and more you know, think on your own and promote yourself. So it gives you that sort of community spirit and that sort of... team-building - that sort of idea that you're part of a team that's working towards a goal. (Chuckaree, 2016)

In other words, the panyard, through musicking, is a powerful social space that affords the opportunity for individuals and groups to experience the integration of selves and selves with others.

3.2.1 Pan, Musicking and the Integration of the Self

Some ways to articulate the integration of the self might be through: expressions of self-belief, self-esteem, a clear sense of purpose and identity, a more rooted sense of community, emphasized through empathy, and empowerment of oneself and others. I was excited to see the parallels in my research and overall vision with the personal experiences of the pan players. Among the interviewees, there was an excellent balance between the personal (individual self) and the group (community). It was sort of like a feedback loop of reciprocity that reinforced the good vibes to sustain the continued integration of the individual selves and uplift the group as a whole.

The western framework of music making typically measures success in individualistic terms, and the accumulation of wealth and emphasis on professionalism serve to separate musicians from the engendered process of participation that Keil espouses. Turino discusses two primary types of music making practices; *participatory* and *presentational performance*. *Participatory performance* “is a special type of artistic practice in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role.” (Turino, 2008) On the other hand, *presentational*

performance “refers to situations where one group of people, the artists, prepare and provide music for another group, the audience, who do not participate in making the music or dancing.” (Turino, 2008) He goes on to state that *participatory performance* models lend more weight to creating social cohesion and feelings of unity:

In a traditional participatory performance model, “the etiquette and quality of sociality is granted priority over the quality of the sound per se. Put another way, participatory music and dance is more about the social relations being realized through the performance than about producing art that can somehow be abstracted from those social relations. (Turino, 2008, p. 35)

The pan community is a hybrid that works towards *presentational performance* models from a solid base built on *participatory performance* values.

Achievements and goals, such as winning competitions, are certainly important, and bands spend countless dedicated hours perfecting a piece when leading up to major finals, such as *Panorama* in Trinidad or *Pan Alive* in Toronto. However, competition and goals appear to function more in order to sustain the group and give direction for the band and the community. What is clear is that the overall essence of joy is never compromised, and it remains overwhelmingly a participatory process. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that even the biggest and most successful bands in Trinidad, like *Phase II Pangroove*, also maintain this focus on community and fun, albeit with vastly greater resources than smaller community bands.

All the interviewees echoed these participatory values, making it clear that the main reason why people keep coming to play the pan and be part of the panyard experience is to enjoy the atmosphere that nourishes it. Or in other

words, to tie in with Keil's work, pan is always about process first and foremost, stemming from the pure enjoyment that people find in playing together in the social communion that is the carnivalesque.

[...] Definitely what drives me is just the pure joy I get from playing (pan). There's nothing quite, you can't really explain it until someone experiences it for themselves. But when you're in the middle of a song, when you're playing with the whole band and you're in the moment and the music's loud, everyone's smiling, jumping up dancing, having fun, and you get to be a part of that, and at a point when you're playing in the song, you just look up and look around you for a second and it feels like everything's kind of in slow motion, it's just like one of the happiest, most comfortable zones I could find myself in, and that feeling is specifically why I keep playing. (Hafiz, 2016)

That feeling of joy and total flow that Darien Hafiz describes has been reiterated by other musicians; In his research, Andrew Mark interviews a musician who described that sense of flow as being like "catching the perfect wave...those moments where you just know everything is right". (Bohn 2013, Mark, p. 66)

In any participatory music-making environment, it is also important to have a platform that allows people who don't traditionally identify as musicians, including beginners, to 1) get into that flow zone; and 2) merge that feeling with a sense of belonging within a larger group, such as what Darien refers to above.

In most panyards, participation radiates outwards, which is not only seen in how the players interact with each other while jamming, but also in their welcoming nature towards their supporters, members of the community and beginners or non-musicians. To my mind, panyards are almost special in that for the most part, anyone can grab some sticks, get behind a pan, and jam away with the band. This was the case in *Pan Fantasy*, which despite being the most successful band in the GTA over the last 10 years and holding a very high

musical standard, actively encourages newbies to come play with them and be part of the experience.

This was a bit of a revelation for me; growing up influenced by the individualistic and often alienating euro-centric aesthetic of musicking, being able to be a part of a highly skilled large band was a beautiful experience. Darien provides valuable insight into the philosophy behind the inclusive and accessible nature of steelbands like *Pan Fantasy*:

I think it's just that we as pan players have so much fun with it, that it's almost like we're doing an injustice if we don't share it with people... just in general from the years I've been involved, I get that vibe from the majority of people. They love to share their culture...everyone loves to share their culture with you right?... so definitely they love to do that. But it's that much fun, you get that much enjoyment out of it, it's like man there's more than enough for me, come see this thing, come check this out, come get involved....so yeah it's really easy for new people to come and get involved because I've always felt that welcome environment...in general the Caribbean culture is quite like that, come share with us, come enjoy with us, it's very laid-back, very easy-going, good vibes, fun, and I find in the panyard it's just an extension of that. (Hafiz, 2016)

This quote by Darien Hafiz raises the theme of *primary abundance*. In the joy of sharing and playing music together, there is a desire to invite others to be part of the flow. In contrast to the panyard and sharing ethos of Caribbean culture, western culture generally endorses an environment of individualism and competition. If we compare and contrast these two approaches, it ultimately becomes an ontological question that has deep ecological implications—how a given perception shapes our reality and vice versa. Some scholars link this ontology of western culture to the influence of modern economics, and attribute it to the ecological crisis. (Brown and Timmerman, 2015) Most ecological discourse, and the policies that feed it, take the stance that we live in a rapidly

depleting world of finite resources, making competition necessary, often at the expense of others. According to Peter Timmerman, this extends into our collective psyche, and ultimately, in the manner in which we perceive and act with our environment:

Modern economics is predicated on an assumption of scarcity-there is not enough to go around, and therefore, we must compete with each other: adjudicate our competing desires through a market, and so forth. I argue that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy, intimately connected to elemental assumptions concerning freedom, breaking limits, and the drive towards more-the engines of modernity. (Timmerman, 2017)

Timmerman and Peter Brown call this an ontology of “primary scarcity/secondary abundance” (Brown and Timmerman, 2015, p.34), in which the world is one of scarcity, and therefore, there is a need to produce abundance through development and resource exploitation. Primary scarcity/secondary abundance is “generated by-and generates-a lack of trust in the fundamental gift, or abundance of things.” (Brown and Timmerman, 2015, p.34) In contrast to modern western society, many ancient and indigenous cultures hold a view that the world is by nature abundant-everything is provided to us-Timmerman terms it “an ontology of primary abundance” (Timmerman, 2017)

If a person feels that their needs are met and “there’s more than enough for me”, they’re likely feeling safe and joyful, coming from an overflowing universe. I propose that it’s much easier to experience the reintegration of the self and selves with others in an environment that is in tune with the ontology of abundance-one based on trust and a belief in a gift-giving, limitless universe. The pan community possesses these qualities of trust and accordingly exudes abundance. To link back to Turner’s work, this healthy dynamic between

individual selves and other members within steelbands results in a family-like atmosphere that, at least within the framework of the panyard, is a form of *(normative) communitas*.

4. BEYOND THE PANYARD

4.1 Pan in Community Arts in Toronto

Here in Toronto, there are artists who are doing great work to spread the joy that is found in the panyard by bringing pan and the carnivalesque to others, including non-musicians. Joy Lapps, a pannist, musician and community-focused arts educator, is one such artist. I first met Joy in September 2016 when she was doing a multi-week course on learning the steelpan as part of an artist's residency at the Downsview public library. She taught the basics of the steelpan to classes of families and adults. Each class later performed a short piece as part of a final concert on December 3, 2016. In her interview, Joy stressed the essential role the steelpan community plays in shaping her core values as a community artist:

I think that steelpan is ... the poster child for community arts, because...you know you were at the panyard, and you saw the people learning and then you saw everybody (saying) "Auntie Wendy, Auntie Wendy (Wendy Jones is the founding member and leader of Pan Fantasy), so everybody (uses) "Auntie" and then we had the peanut gallery of the women that were there, and they make sure that you're fed but they're also there to give the quick jokes and make fun of the arranger and ...there was a little girl ... she played bass...I remember her from when she was 4 years old or 3 years old, scooting around the panyard...on her scooter, because that's what the kids do, they're running around, they're playing, ...you know, somebody's just had a baby...(but) the person who just had the baby's playing, but somebody's there to hold the baby...it's such a beautiful thing so I think, maybe it's my art form and I'm biased, but outside of samba, steelpan is like... (Lapps, 2016)

Joy didn't have to finish her sentence; I immediately understood the beauty that she was describing. I spent a few weeks in July 2016 playing the steelpan with *Pan Fantasy*. In that brief time, I got a very good sense of the loving, family-like atmosphere that Joy talks about. I met Wendy and the arranger, Al Foster, along

with several other members of the band. I was amazed at how warm and welcoming everyone was.

To illustrate this feeling of beauty that Joy Lapps describes, one experience stands out in particular. Early one evening before getting started with music practice, everyone gathered in one of the rooms in the warehouse that *Pan Fantasy* rents. It was a ceremony where Wendy and a few other group leaders presented awards to members who had achieved milestones. The first awards went to the youngest members; one of the children was given an award and was asked to come up to the front to celebrate his recent graduation from first grade. It was so beautiful and refreshing to see a community lifting up its youngest members, honouring their value and making them feel part of the group. There were also awards and celebratory moments for some older members who had graduated from post-secondary institutions. It was a powerful experience for me, and I was actually moved to tears during a particular speech by one member who discussed overcoming mental health difficulties.

Joy is spreading the community support and love that steelbands offer to the wider community. She attests to the pan's strength as an instrument for teaching groups due to its ease of use:

I'm gonna say that from an arts education perspective, I love (the pan) because of its accessibility and because I can work with a class for an hour and they'll be playing something... my best moment, or some of my favourite moments is when I go into a school, go into a classroom, work with a teacher, and they give me the "that kid did that", "that child did that?" and they've just built this perception ...and it's just like, No, No, No, they just don't learn that way, or it's just giving a child an opportunity to accomplish something because sometimes they just need to feel good about something to apply themselves in these other places, so that's like a

big thing for me, and... my favourite thing is like “oh yeah, you think they’re bad? Oh they’re very good!” (Lapps, 2016)

I find this to be an insightful passage by Joy, who really captures a big part of what ails our society and may be one of the keys to how participatory-based music groups help its members towards psychic wholeness. To my perspective, there are a lot of people in our society who are deeply locked into a doubt-riddled false narrative about themselves that usually starts in childhood. Unfortunately, by the time they are adults many of them don’t have a true sense of who they are or where their passions lie.

That was a description of me until about 3 years ago. When I was a child, I internalized a negative self-perception from others that didn’t afford me the opportunity to realize my true expression, which was music. How many of us feel the burden of this unfortunate reality? How many among us were young children whose teachers or parents projected their own negative perception onto us and passed on the template with which we deny our own talents and abilities? This really highlights the power of what I witnessed in the panyard that day; empowering people together, enriching lives, and building community through positive reinforcement.

Joy is one person who is actively working towards reversing this trend and using the pan, musicking and the *carnavalesque* to provide people with a means and space to express themselves. At the final concert on December 3, 2016, I saw a particular form of the panyard *carnavalesque* spirit in a community outreach context. The concert consisted of children and youth, families of children and adults, and adults-only groups. Each group played a Christmas-themed song

using an orchestral range of different steelpan instruments (bass, tenor, cello, etc) Some of the older students mentioned to me that they were nervous before performing their piece. However, I observed that once the students were in front of the instrument, they simply concentrated on playing their notes correctly, and it seemed to me that the nervousness dissipated as they got into the flow of the moment.

In some informal conversations after the concert, some of the participants told me about how they had been transformed by the experience. A lady from the Caribbean told me that she had always wanted to learn to play the pan and it felt wonderful to experience her culture through an artistic lens. In addition, a married couple, that had not been very familiar with Caribbean culture before taking the classes, were excited because the pan became an instrument that both of them could learn on together, giving them a shared experience. They were also hoping to visit Trinidad to get to know the culture and pan more intimately.

Seeing the joy on people's faces, the cultural diversity of the students, and the curiosity sparked within them, showed me how valuable this work is. Like the atmosphere that I witnessed in the *Pan Fantasy* steelband, Joy Lapps is taking the *carnavalesque* spirit into new contexts, and empowering people and enriching their lives as a result.

4.2 The Retro Electro Collective

The *Retro Electro Collective* was an incredible and almost accidental experience that gave structure and deep personal meaning to my growing self-expression as a community artist. It also became a core part of my personal take on expanding the carnivalesque and the quintessence of the panyard into new contexts. The group consisted of MES students who decided to regularly meet and play music together from November 2015-April 2016. The Retro Electro Collective borrowed several key elements that are present in the carnivalesque, the pan community, and Turner's theories of *antistructure*.

4.2.1 Background

When the fall semester began in 2015, I returned to FES feeling eager and committed to heading in a research direction that sparked passion within me: music. I joined professor Peter Timmerman's *Environmental Music Collective*, which was a perfect opportunity to learn basic music theory and overcome some of my shyness by playing music in a participatory setting. In addition, while exploring wonderful articles on natural soundscapes that professor Chris Cavanaugh had recommended as part of an independent-directed study (IDS) on music, one book particularly fascinated me; *The Tuning of the World* by R. Murray Schafer. It was a lovely anecdotal account of the ancient relationship between human civilization and its connection to nature through music and sound. Schafer discusses how humans have been inspired to make music by mimicking the symphony of sounds in nature; from the wondrous polyphonous sounds of bird song to the awe-inspiring power of thunder.

I was invited by Chris to give a short brown-bag lunch session on sound in November 2015 at the *Wild Garden Media Centre*. Although I felt a bit nervous about how the session would go, I was also excited to share Schafer's concepts and invite the attendees to do a spontaneous improvisation musicking session with me. I had some personal musical equipment and was very keen on sharing my toys with others, as up until that point had I usually practiced music on my own.

The session ended up being a great success; after a short talk, the attendees were happy to try out the experimental improv. To break the ice, my friend Bernadette Wycks led some fun warm-up exercises to get us working together and communicating non-verbally by making music with our bodies, such as clapping our hands or stomping our feet. After a couple of minutes, we had a nice rhythm going and everyone was in a more relaxed space. The time then came to hit the decks! Each person took an instrument (there was a mix of acoustic and electronic) and we slowly built up a lovely synchronized rhythm together. It was like we were collectively learning to fly, slowly spreading our wings and lifting off the ground. It was experimental and fun; both in the music and in the way we were dialoguing with each other.

I originally didn't have any plans beyond the brown bag lunch session but some of the participants expressed interest in doing a regular improv jam collective. Over the fall and winter terms, we met every 2-3 weeks for a couple of hours in the *Crossroads* gallery or The *Wild Garden Media Centre* to hang out and play music together.

In mid January 2016, the opportunity came up to perform at the *Eco Arts and Media Cabaret* that was scheduled for April 1, 2016. When I proposed the idea of the *retro electro music collective* doing an experimental performance on stage, the other members wholeheartedly supported the idea. Despite never having performed music live on stage before, we collectively took on this challenge.

4.2.2 Musicking Praxis

It is useful to reflect on what elements of the pan-inspired atmosphere that made the *retro-electro* sessions successful. The carnivalesque is embodied in the ludic, and carnivals in general are symbolic of loosening of control (and renewing oneself); this allows for greater creativity to flow. (Armstrong, 2010; Nurse, 1999) This is reflective in the musicking approach of steelbands where the loosening of control is a big part of the pan experience. During my time in the *Pan Fantasy* panyard, eating, socializing, and the setting up of equipment would take up 50% or more of the total time of a practice session. When the time came to rehearse, the mood shifted to one that required intense focus; the arranger, Al Foster, took full control and worked repeatedly on certain drills to ensure full competency of key song sections. This music pedagogy is the process over product experience in action; it places an emphasis on playfulness and social communion to strengthen the group and allow for a more integrated flow experience while musicking.

As the main facilitator of the *retro electro music collective*, I sought to mimic the panyard by giving up control and creating an atmosphere of *antistructure* that

was fun, inclusive and as free from hierarchy or rigidity that was practically possible. Several times during the first few minutes of the earlier sessions, I sometimes felt a bit agitated if we didn't start jamming right away. Eventually, I understood that it was better to relax and let things flow naturally and I soon realized that these "delays" were actually where a lot of the magic was to be found; the laughter, good conversation, and the spontaneity.

Being able to connect with the group you are with is key to creating a comforting space that nurtures people to take risks and make "mistakes". One thing I love most about this experience was the informal nature of the sessions, which allowed me to connect with the other group members. [It was facilitated with the] fluidity and space for each member to connect on different levels, which allowed us to collectively connect in our sounds in music. (Caravaggio, 2017)

I was particularly motivated by the fact that most beginners find traditional music learning intimidating and alienating. Letting go gave others a safe space to let their creativity flow, and better understand the different ways they like to express themselves musically.

This point was well illustrated by one of the participants:

I learned that I like staying in one rhythm, one melody, doing it over and over, until I feel safe with it. I approach my participation, perhaps, as helping with the foundation of the song, since I don't feel confident yet with experimenting too wildly with melody. (Wycks, 2017)

In some ways, it seems that the *retro electro* experience was a testament to Keil's philosophical vision and theory of PDs since our focus was always grounded in the process and the relationships that we built collectively, rather than the end product. That is not to dismiss the importance of having something to work towards. In fact, having the deadline to meet and the opportunity to

perform a piece for an audience was crucial to keeping the collective committed and gave us a framework to shape our vision.

For the live performance at the *Eco Arts and Media Cabaret*, each member wore costumes and masks in keeping with the *carnavalesque* theme. The masks, made in a workshop held by a fellow collective member, were a way for each of us to explore our personal and collective identities as musicking collaborators. Regarding the symbolic meaning of the mask in carnival, Armstrong paraphrases Turner:

The central icon of carnival is the mask. As a hinge between an external and a hidden identity, the mask speaks to the importance to carnival of liminality. The external identity proposed by the mask points to an aspiration, to an ideal or otherwise desired identity, and alerts us to how identity is asserted in carnival principally through theatrical gestures, which are seen in a mirror of self-image as much as by onlookers. Liminality is lived out in carnival in a rhetorical cocktail which temporarily closes the gap between frustration and empowerment. Thus, despite the distinction between carnival and everyday life, the carnival aesthetic does not project us into a hermetic world of fantasy but rather into an aesthetically sharpened and socially rooted tension between the two domains. (Armstrong, 2010; Turner 1969, 1987)

For me, performing a musical piece live and dressing up were liminal gestures that had a cathartic effect. Musicking (medium), the *carnavalesque* (aesthetic) and pan (environment) provided the backdrop for me to carry out the long-suppressed desire of my true self; making music to share joy with others.

In terms of participation, the more sessions we had together, the more we bonded with each other. A lot of the time spent catching up on our lives, sharing food and even singing karaoke translated into the quality and cohesiveness of our musicking. We were able to build trust in a relatively short time period, and

that meant that everyone felt included; each member participated in the overall process of the music.

I learned that being creative with music helps people relax and connects people on a deep psychological level. Just like birds know how to automatically fly together, people who practice being creative together understand that psychic connection, and connect on a deep body level. The creative impulse becomes collective. In that way, I feel connected to a larger whole, even if it was brief. (Wycks, 2017)

That psychic connection that we shared was meaningful because, even in a setting where people have very little musical experience, it is possible to engage in flow and experience the synchronicity of Keil's PDs. In addition to feeling more connected with ourselves and each other, the sessions had other beneficial qualities such as lowering stress levels:

I absolutely loved it. It actually surprised me how much I enjoyed it. It was something that I always made time for because I felt it really reduced my level of stress. The people in the music collective were wonderful, kind, and supportive. It really turned into a supportive school group in a sense, that included a kind of artistic release. I was part of the music collective at a time when I was only taking classes in my Masters and I found it to be a creative outlet I didn't have in the classroom. It felt calming to play instruments with others, and it felt very collaborative. We really worked together to create a piece to then present. I used to act a bit and the thrill of performing was really exciting to return to. (Cummins, 2017)

I suggest that one way to measure the integration of the self is to see how a person learns more about themselves; what they like, how they relate to the world, and what makes them feel safe and happy. In the interviews with the pan players, feelings of self-worth, joy, and the desire to share that happiness with others were major themes of self-integration. Apart from the magic of the brief moments we shared during the sessions and later on stage, the most successful demonstration of self-integration may be that every member of the retro electro

collective gained valuable insight into themselves and how musicking made them feel fulfilled, even if they hadn't considered themselves to be musically inclined before.

Most members made reference to realizing the importance of having a musical outlet in their lives going forward, for various reasons. One member, Natalie Cummins, wrote that being in the collective helped her better relate to a part of her partner's life as a musician. "He was excited too that we had something to share, and I came to better understand the hard work, patience, and collaboration needed to be in a band." (Cummins, 2017) Bernadette Wycks mentioned that she is motivated to learn the ukulele and in the future, she would like to "help others connect through music one day." (Bernadette, 2017) For Omar Mujtaba, being in the collective affirmed his emerging artistic direction, and sense of self:

It's common to come across people who deny their own talent or skill because they are taught by society that if you do not go through a particular experience or training/schooling, you cannot claim ownership over the title as musician or artist... At the time the Collective had formed, I was in my first semester of graduate school and beginning to feel comfortable in taking ownership of the title of artist. Now I do feel I embrace the title, but musically there's ways to go. My friends in the Collective are very friendly and positive and had always enjoyed my contributions to the overall sound, and had found ways to bring it together. Seeing the feedback from my friends in the Collective proved to me that what I had done over the years with music was learning, even though it wasn't in a formal way. (Omar, 2017)

This passage from Omar reflects back to me the things I personally hoped to achieve when I set out to facilitate the sessions. As mentioned in the previous section, I particularly identify with the fact that people often deny or cover up their talents. Until the last couple of years, I had always downplayed or outright

suppressed the things that inspire passion within me. Even though I dabbled off and on the last decade with music software, I only started to really dedicate myself to music and art in my *MES* program. In a case like mine, where I had always been too afraid to express myself artistically, community (*retro electro music collective*) became the container from which I could find my musical voice.

Taken collectively, these insights align nicely with those of the pan interviewees. Albeit brief in terms of duration, the musicking and *carnavalesque* focused *retro electro music collective* planted the seeds that may well contribute towards the integration of the self for each of its members.

4.3 Carnvallissima, Carnival is Me

My performance piece was a milestone and summarizes my journey of incorporating the carnivalesque into my inner and outer evolution of self-integration. A link to the full performance can be found in Appendix II. It was a mixed media live performance that weaved together storytelling through video, spoken word in the form of diary entries, and original music that I composed. A major theme was the connection to place, the foundation from which I derived my research direction. Once I nurtured my bonds with my family, I reconnected to my Trinidadian heritage. Engaging with the Trinidadian culture and natural landscape in turn reinforced my self-expression as an artist and musician. It became an evolving organic reciprocal process; the more I fed my artistic expression, the greater I felt in alignment with myself and so on.

My piece mirrored this cyclical process of self-nurturing by situating my diary entries that expressed this greater understanding of my culture in

combination with a backdrop of video footage of nature, both in Trinidad and in Canada, and scenes of important carnival events; the panyards, *Panorama* finals, and *J'ouvert*.

By combining my music, video, and poetic writing, I intended to create a dream-like atmosphere that reflects the (self) connective process of the subconscious or previously inaccessible parts of myself.

Pan and the carnivalesque form the liminal space through which I use art to create a deeper understanding of self; Bateson's *primary process*. When I invoke the carnivalesque through pan, calypso, soca, or in natural landscapes of Trinidad and Tobago, I am in simultaneous internal and external dialogue with my true being.

At the end of the piece, I play a couple of musical numbers, one was co-written with my dear friend, Bernadette Wycks, and the second was a techno-inspired electronic musical piece. The end theme is that I find peace through music making, whether with others or as an individual. This is consistent with my overall research goal; the way that self-integration is expressed is unique for every person that I interviewed or with whom I collaborated (panyards, Joy Lapps and members of the retro electro collective). In all cases, music is the common element that connects them to themselves and others.

Taking the overall research into an auto-ethnographic direction afforded me the license to explore liminal boundaries – the story describes a gradual yet fundamental shift from a personal ontology of scarcity to one of abundance. The state of scarcity was one where I harboured intrusive and detrimental negative

thoughts and poor perception of self, which resulted in a period of despair and crisis. Once I grounded myself through nature, heritage, and music, the thoughts transformed into self-love, resulting in a state of inner peace and abundance. In both instances, my perspective shaped my outer reality; in scarcity, my music was locked up inside of me whereas in abundance, I was able to release my inner melodies and share them with others.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I looked at how the *carnavalesque* is a spirit, which, manifested in the panyard, is a reflection of a particular lived reality. At its core, it expresses itself in feelings of joy and communal well-being, from which spring forth *primary abundance*, an ontology consistent with many indigenous and ancient cultures (Timmerman, 2017). The *carnavalesque* and pan is a rich cultural expression that, as I learned through my research, facilitates the reintegration of the self through connection to the community and through connection to a deeper part of the self. The implication is that there is a feeling of overflowing abundance that is generated by those musicking experiences, and that can be an ontology to help shift how we see ourselves and the world around us. I also found that music helped people in the panyard to get into the flow and experience integration of the self by sharing food, developing self-worth, and cultivating more joy and clarity, which helped to provide the space for a shift in perception about themselves and the outer world.

There is a great need to share the abundance ontology of the *carnavalesque* in contexts outside of its traditional borders. This can be seen in the work that Joy Lapp is doing in helping the wider multicultural community of children, parents, and families experience a sense of wholeness through the playing of pan.

I used musicking as a methodology and a praxis to encourage participation and to plant seeds of (self)integration with the *retro electro music collective*. Finally, I found this abundance ontology cultivated within myself as I

developed and performed my final auto ethnographic project, *Carnivalissima, Carnival Is Me*. I found the carnivalesque seeds that had been planted in my youth starting to sprout into true expression. I discovered abundance in sharing the joy I felt as I expressed more of my true self. This culminated in the sharing of my personal transformation through performance, where I took the motifs of nature, place (Trinidad and Tobago), the *carnivalesque*, pan and musicking to show a shift from a situation of trauma and despair to one of hope, then joy and self-integration; inner and outer harmony.

Going forward, some key exciting themes emerge. It will be beneficial to further explore how the carnivalesque expressions of pan and musicking can be used to channel *primary abundance*. The next step would be to explore the idea of an ontology of abundance as a permanent state. This is not to say that it would be static and unmoving - rather, as each person achieves reintegration of the self and allows a more joyful expression to flow through them-that would become the new "normal" baseline for them. The more people have joy as a baseline, the more other people will have access to those feelings of connection and acceptance. Abundance comes through variety and fluidity, and music, being universal, is a primary way to achieve that *communitas* state. With more people connecting to that flow, we can build momentum away from a scarcity ontology towards a way of being that values harmony and overflowing abundance.

On a personal level, I want to help others to shift by providing the space to cultivate trust, self-understanding and healing through music. I will explore this further with the *retro electro music collective* and by providing musicking

workshops. I especially want to help beginners unfamiliar with their inner music to build trust in themselves, and let it flow outward. Facilitating the unfolding of their stories as they get into the flow would allow Bateman's primary process to work its magic.

I will continue to develop relationships with the pan community in Trinidad and the Greater Toronto Area where the sense of *primary abundance* is ever present. Their cultivation of the perceptual paradigm of “there’s more than enough for me... come get involved” (Hafiz, 2016) points us towards a desire to know how celebrating together can help expand on current research on *communitas*.

In this way, I can continue to integrate playing pan, musicking, and the *carnavalesque* as part of myself. It will become my methodology, praxis, and spiritual ontology. Abundance will become my way of being because I am sharing joy with others and that will help shape the world around me. When I look back at my time in the *Faculty of Environmental Studies*, I am excited to see how music and place-making has helped my expansion of self. I look forward to the new questions that the praxis of musicking will spur me to ask and guide me to answer.

6. APPENDIX 1: JOURNAL ENTRIES

6.1 Panorama Finals

“One of the nice moments that I enjoy for Panorama, is not only playing on the stage and when the bright lights hits you, but when you’re playing outside the savannah, on what we call the track and you have people right next to the rack that you’re playing in, enjoying your music, dancing to your music and expressing themselves when they hear certain parts of your music...that’s a joy, that’s a definite joy. The vibe that you get inside the band by playing and people around you enjoying what you are putting out, it is pure satisfaction.” (Mohammed, 2016)

Panorama is the showcase event for pan held on the Saturday before carnival Monday and Tuesday. For this event, bands of all categories (small, medium and large) take the stage to perform their piece, often a version of a famous calypso or soca song, on the stage at the Queen’s Park savannah stadium. As I entered the grounds, I reflected on my youth. Growing up, I had not had the pleasure of experiencing this side of Trinidadian culture. The savannah for me used to be a vast grassy playground in the middle of the city where my granny would walk during the cool evenings with her church friends, and where you could find yummy coconut water from local vendors. We arrived at the savannah around 8:00pm, the competition was just getting into gear. The whole area outside of the Queen’s Park stadium was full of different steelbands, adorned in their respective colours and attire. There were also vendors selling an assortment of food and drinks, and people milled about excitedly, a substantial buzz in the air. This area, affectionately known as the track by Trinidadians, is where the bands practice in an intimate way with their fans, who in turn give the bands a final boost of energy before taking the stage to perform. Even in a formalized setting of a major competition with high stakes – the prize money for

the large band winner totals more than \$2 million TT (\$300,000-500,000 CDN) – community presence is strong. Bands run through their pieces and members and fans alike sway their hips to the music, silhouetted by the night sky and low lying mountains in the distance. This is the embodiment of the carnivalesque; the ludic behaviour, the expression of joy on people’s faces, sensuality through everyone being fully in their bodies, dancing freely. It is social communion, the non-verbal bonding reflected in the warmth that is found among thousands of people who have gathered here for one purpose...pan.

6.2 J’ouvert

J’ouvert was the most special of the carnival experiences. A creole derivative of the French word, it literally means “day open”, it traditionally starts in the early hours of Monday morning and leads into the daytime celebration of Carnival Monday. (Sheriff, 2014)

Bernadette and I went to sleep from 10pm until 1am. We woke up half asleep and groggy, where outside the window we could hear the sounds of music in the distance, with the occasional shout of joy.

We arrived to the j’ouvert block party at the compound from where the procession was set to start. Just as we arrived, a staff member offered us free shots, so very quickly I felt the effects of the alcohol. Music blared from mountainous sound trucks, the bass rippled through my chest. I was excited; I have always admired dub music and history of the sound systems from Jamaica in the 60s and 70s. I hadn’t known that it was a big part of Trinidad too, and now here I was experiencing Sound System Culture in person!!

Wonderful soca rhythms came out of the different trucks parked at various points of the block. A short time later, we gathered round a mud and clay truck, and got all muddied up, a j'ouvert tradition. Within minutes we were all taking turns smearing cold and clammy mud all over each other, with both friends and the occasional stranger.

Then at 4am, it was time to leave the yard and start the procession. What was extra special about this particular j'ouvert party was the presence of the Laventille Rhythm Section, a legendary group that uses percussive instruments to create African-roots polyrhythms. To me, this represented the best of both worlds; one truck with live percussive instruments and three other trucks with the digital landscape. I had choice and it was like a full size musical playground.

We did a procession along a set route that passed by the Savannah, the central park in Trinidad where Carnival Tuesday would take place a day later. About two blocks after the Savannah, it was about 6 in the morning and I was exhausted, having hung off the rum truck at various points over the course of the early morning; I was running low on fuel. We were sitting on the curb between the crowd and the sound trucks. I started to say that I'm ready to go home, when suddenly another sound truck approached us and there were all kinds of colourful paint powder being tossed about and everyone was covered in red, pink, blue and yellow colours, mixed with mud. I instantly took on the tremendous surge of energy of hundreds of people dancing together, powered by the relentless waves of bass and percussion bursting out of the sound truck's towering speakers. I sprang to life, and danced non-stop for another 3 hours!

Looking back, it just shows the effect that music can have on people, and how much power there is in community, in this case a transitory moment of a large group of people together, riding a powerful wave. In its place is a collective moment where class, gender, and inhibitions vanished, replaced by a non-verbal dialogue of movement; in effect spontaneous communitas. While no doubt the alcohol was a factor, I had never felt so free, so kinetically tuned to the music, and connected to others. Since that singular experience, I have felt more in my body, freer in dancing, holding that memory of place and sense of freedom inside me. My hips sway, my heart sings, and the self-consciousness that used to eat me up falls by the wayside, becoming little more than a fading memory.

6.3 Carnival Tuesday

Carnival Tuesday is the climax of carnival, when people of all ages come to the street to celebrate together. In Port of Spain, the capital city, masqueraders do a procession from the downtown area to the Queen's Park Savannah, where each band enters the grounds before walking across the main stage in the stadium. My friend Bernadette and I decided to spend the day at the savannah, in order to see all the masquerading bands as they arrived.

We got there around 11:00am, and the party had been in full swing since the early hours (processions start around 7-8am). The midday sun was blazingly hot, and we realized that it would be important to take frequent breaks in the shade and drink plenty of water. I walked over to the area where the bands were coming in. It was magical, a total explosion of sound and colour! Many of the masquerade costumes were stunningly beautiful, the result of bold artistic visions

and hundreds of hours of work. Each band had their own decorated float and some masqueraders showed off their large-sized puppets. Costume themes ranged from angels and demons to butterflies and grasshoppers. To one side, the moko jumbies, people wearing masks and performing on stilts, danced together and practiced complex acrobatic moves. The mood was upbeat and the soca rhythms kept everyone moving and dancing. Although it was quite crowded in some areas, there was a gentleness in the atmosphere, and it was clearly a space that accepted everyone and everything. Here people could be themselves; evident in the way the revellers openly performed in character or in the way they danced with total abandon.

Standing amidst the celebration, I can't help but marvel at its significance. Carnival is an invitation to be oneself, to be playful, to feel wholly in one's body. All around me was an abundance of creativity and social communion. During carnival, we are reminded of the true power of embracing playfulness – by forgetting our worries, we become aware of the joy of the moment. In that joy, we are in touch with ourselves.

7. Appendix 2: Final Performance (Carnivallissima, Carnival is Me)

The performance is on my YouTube channel. For access to the full performance link please send a request to mreece09@gmail.com





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INTERVIEWS

| Name | Location | Date | Type |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Ronald Mohammed | Rituals Coffee House, Trinidad | Feb 10, 20 | Live |
| Johann Chuckaree | Family Home, Trinidad | Feb 19, 201 | Live |
| Darien Hafiz | Pan Fantasy panyard, Toronto | Aug 28, 2016 | Live |
| Joy Lapps | Downsview Public Library, Toronto | Sep 29, 2016 | Live |
| Bernadette Wycks | N/A | Jan 12, 2017 | Written |
| Auranne Paulina | N/A | Jan 12, 2017 | Written |
| Omar Mujtaba | N/A | Jan 14, 2017 | Written |
| Natalie Cummins | N/A | Jan 17, 2017 | Written |
| Olivia Caravaggio | N/A | Jan 20, 2017 | Written |