

The Helen Carswell Chair in Community Engaged Research in the Arts

Final Reports - 2019

Development and expansion of steelpan programs at RPSM

Anthony Salah Wilson

What is this research about?

The program of steelpan development continues at Regent Park School of Music. This year the emphasis was on establishing a consistency of the on-going programs and their processes. The programs at Regent Park and Jane and Finch focused with an impetus on the types of repertoire.

What did the researcher do?

Prepared a number of scores of musical arrangements for steelpan ensembles (SATB). The scores are a variety of genres and styles. Designed for SATB, but also includes additional voices in some of the repertoire. These will be added to the library of RPSM.

What did the researcher find?

The Monsignor Fraser program with its intergenerational nature underwent a change in time structure. This resulted in a great portion of the class unable to participate. The program time of 6pm to 7pm was replaced by 7pm to 8pm. This change affected an entire family including a grandmother a daughter two grand kids and a cousin. Another family of mother and two daughters were unable to attend. However, they were replaced by a new group of people and so the program continued. We were only aware of the previous group's problem with the change of time midway in the semester. The programs was successfully building up until the interruption of COVID 19. Recommendations, consider a second class if there are enough students

A few more recommendations would include the following:

- Workshops for steelpan teachers for information on steelpan playing techniques and note & rote learning.
- Outreach- dialogue and preparation for the participation of RPSM at the Caribbean Community annual steelpan festival.

What you need to know

In 2018, a project was initiated in the upgrading of the steelpan programs at RPSM. The programs were located at the RPSM center downtown, one at Jane & Finch area and another at Monsignor Fraser school. The status expressed at that time, showed a stagnation of growth and development, recruitment was down, interest and enthusiasm were low. In addition, the RPSM administration was interested in finding ways to integrate with the Caribbean steelpan community. They considered the annual Caribbean "Caribana" festival as an example.

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There was some growth and development with all of the programs until the COVID 19. It is hopeful that there may be a continuation so that these programs may come to fruition.

How can you use this research?

Steelpan development is an ongoing process and often time there are always obstacles that present themselves to hinder growth. This research identified some of the problems and offered suggestions. These suggestions have been tested and have proved effective in aiding development. By providing an adequate repertoire, a library of arranged music scores for steelpan ensembles can be established and grow accordingly. By understanding the concept of “note and rote” learning, teachers can provide additional means of aiding more students in need. Keeping the pans tuned is not only pleasing to the students but an aid to correct tonalities and ear training. Establishing a program for assisting teachers will keep consistency in the levels of growth for the programs and today social media is an asset in outreach recruitment.

About the researcher

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References

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Keywords

Steelpan, pan, music, community, programs, growth and development.

About the Helen Carswell Chair in Community Engaged Research in the Arts

The Helen Carswell Chair represents a partnership between York University and Regent Park School of Music (RPSM). All faculty and graduate students of the university are encouraged to collaborate with RPSM on special projects that are aimed at improving community music programming and curriculum for children in the Jane and Finch neighborhood and beyond.

<https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/xmlui/handle/10315/36357>