

A Case Study of Early Professional Development Opportunities for Steel Band Directors in the United States: The Haystack Steelpan Program

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to examine the impact of the Haystack Steelpan Program on the development of professional development opportunities for those interested in playing and directing steel bands in K-12 schools, colleges and community. The article chronicles the development of steel bands in the United States from 1982 – 1989 and includes interviews with participants in the program during that time. As a result, themes of networking, exposure to new music and teaching methods, and increased access and capacity for growth for the steelpan art form emerged. The study concludes with recommendations for future research that would provide documentation to advocate for the future of steel bands as ensembles in the Academy and beyond. The author provides print, video and website resources for the reader.

Keywords: music education, pre-service, multicultural, steel band, community music, professional development

Introduction

Over 600 K-12 and collegiate U.S. steel bands now exist since Pete Seeger organized the first U.S. academic steel band at UCLA in 1957 (Haskett, 2014). Various academic steel band traditions have developed since 1957, with directors of varying musical backgrounds directing these ensembles. Unfortunately, pre-service music educators entering the field were not, and are still not, adequately prepared to successfully direct world music ensembles.

The Haystack Steelpan Workshop, under the direction of James Leyden, was one of the earliest formalized programs aimed at addressing this gap. Designed as a community outreach program, it included potential teachers, current teachers, hobbyists, and professional players; however, this study specifically focuses on how this program functioned as a professional development opportunity and aided the spread of the steelpan art form in U.S. academic institutions. This case is particularly compelling since the community outreach program had a direct impact on K-12 and collegiate programs. The following section provides a historical context for the study and examines the growth of steelpan in U.S. schools and universities.

Historical Context

In the late 1940s, a new instrument, the steelpan, was brought to the U.S. from the Caribbean. The instrument was a product of ingenuity and adaptation by the people of Trinidad as a reaction to colonial power differentials, their embrace of a communal musical culture, and resourceful repurposing of 55-gallon oil barrels that were a byproduct of a U.S. base in Trinidad during World War II. In 1949, Rudy King, widely considered an American steelpan pioneer, began performing on the East Coast providing exposure for the instrument. While one cannot determine the first instance of steelpan in the United States, King's work was the most notable during this period (Nurse, 2007).

Several individuals and groups were prominent during the 1950s. Chief Musician Charles Roeper founded the U.S. Navy Steel Band in 1957 at the command of Rear Admiral Dan Gallery, the commander of the Tenth Naval District in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Gallery purchased the instruments, to Roeper's surprise, and commanded Roeper's brass band musicians to learn how to play steelpans. The group toured extensively in the U.S. performing at the White House and on variety shows such as *The Ed Sullivan Show*. This ensemble provided widespread exposure of the steel band in the U.S. By 1999, when the group disbanded, they had presented over 20,000 performances throughout the world (Martin, 2011).

The folklorist Pete Seeger also had an important role in the establishment of steel bands in the U.S. By 1957, Seeger had established a steel band at UCLA. He also helped establish other early collegiate steel bands at Cornell, and Michigan State University. These early ensembles usually consisted of students from the Caribbean. While none of these early school steel bands lasted for very long, they set a precedent for steel bands in the schools during the following decades (Martin, 2011).

In 1959, Kim Loy Wong recorded *Kim Loy Wong and his Wiltwyck Steel Band*, and, in collaboration with Pete Seeger, recorded his University Settlement steel band album and created an instruction manual on building steelpans (Seeger, 1961). These early groups provided the starting point for academic steel bands in the U.S.

The following twenty years proved to be the foundational period for U.S. school and university steel bands. Several ensembles were formed during this time that had a significant impact on the art form in the U.S. In 1967, Thomas Henry founded the Tuley High School Steel Band (now Roberto Clemente High School) in Chicago, Illinois, which is the longest surviving

high school steel band in the United States. Northern Illinois University boasts the oldest surviving collegiate steel band, which was started in 1972.

Additionally, the following schools and universities established significant programs that contributed to the development of steel bands in the U.S.:

- Chappaqua High School
New York
Founded by Jimmy Leyden in 1971
- Chambersburg Area Senior High School
Pennsylvania
Founded by Lynn Lerew in 1971
- Dundee Central High School
New York
Founded by Ronald Miller in 1972 or 1975
- Performing Arts Learning Center
Minneapolis
Founded by Cliff Alexis in 1973
- Lancaster High School
New York
Founded by Joe Marone in 1974
- Washington High School
Pennsylvania
Founded by Marc Svaline in 1985
- University of Illinois
Illinois
Founded by Tom Siwe in 1977
- Oberlin College
Ohio
Student-led since 1978
- Desert Winds Elementary School
Arizona
Founded by Jerry Lopatin in 1978

Six of these steel bands are currently active and many of these groups have performed and/or toured extensively, giving exposure to the ensemble.

Unlike Seeger's early bands, many of the students in these groups were not from the Caribbean. This, in combination with relatively little world music education for the directors, resulted in some challenges for the developing steel band movement in the United States.

Significant challenges lay ahead for the second generation of U.S. steel band directors as they took charge of ensembles in the 1980s. There was a distinct lack of access to professional development or steelpan tuning services, and there were minimal opportunities for networking. O'Connor (1975) noted 13 steel bands in the U.S and Canada. Many of the directors were isolated geographically and lacked access to professional development opportunities.

Several steel band workshops have had an important impact on the development of steel bands and steel band directors in the United States. These programs continued the early work of the Haystack program.

The Birch Creek Steelpan Workshop, in Wisconsin, began in the early 1980s, and with Haystack, was the only other steelpan workshop at the time. This program was geared towards high school music students that wanted to supplement their music education during the summers. The program was also critical to the development of young steel band directors in the United States. College students assisted their faculty from Northern Illinois University when instructing the high school students. Lastly, this program was a direct outgrowth of the Northern Illinois University Steel Band and is one of the earliest examples of such a partnership between music faculty and a community world music program.

Meet Me in Morgantown (MMIM), which began in 1992, was a derivative workshop from the Haystack workshop and was a continuation of Ellie Mannette's involvement with the

development of the steelpan art form in the United States. Unfortunately, there are no scholarly documents that describe his work, nor have scholars analyzed this festival for impact on the field. MMIM provided instruction to steelpan school-aged and adult students based on ability level. This program also allowed for exposure to the building and tuning process and an opportunity for participants to be taught by world-class steelpan performers.

The Pan Ramajay Steelpan Festival, led by Tom Miller, is now one of the only summer festivals in the western U.S. and frequently utilizes different clinicians than the other festivals. The program is quite similar to the Festival of Steel; however, the participants for each program are largely different individuals.

In the following section, I provide context for this study through an examination of research literature about steel bands in the schools, multicultural music education. The paucity of research on the subject is prominent, and the literature demonstrates the need for a professional development model for steel band directors.

Literature Review

In the 1940s, members of the National Association for Music Education (MENC and now NAfME) began promoting world music as a means to broaden cultural understanding. Support from the International Society for Music Education (ISME) followed suit in 1953, and the attendees at the Yale Seminar on Music Education concurred in 1963. While membership in these major organizations indicated overall support for the notion of world music in the classroom, major systemic hurdles such as the lack of exposure to world music and related teaching strategies for pre-service music educators during their undergraduate programs (Wang & Humphreys, 2009) remain to this day.

While music teachers should be well-versed in music from a variety of cultures (Montague, 1988; Navarro, 1989; Palmer, 1994; Volk, 1998) and many exhibit positive attitudes toward teaching multicultural music (Moore, 1993; McClellan, 2002), the classical western music tradition represents much of the U.S. collegiate music curriculum, which includes pre-service music teacher programs (Asmus, 2001; Emmons, 2004; Humphreys, 2002; Reimer, 2002; Rideout, 1990; Volk, 1998).

Haskett (2014) examined various U.S. steel band traditions, focusing on the wide variety of pedagogical and curricular choices made by directors of steel bands. He noted that many players in steel bands are taught through a mixture of teaching strategies, including rote (visual and aural) and written notation (both chord charts and fully composed charts). Similarly, Morford (2007) noted that there are a variety of traditions in world music settings, and found that there was considerable variance between directors' teaching strategies, repertoire selection, and educational goals. He posited that a unified approach to teaching world music might not be appropriate. Boyce (2014) examined the motivations of students to participate in a high school steel band and found that students largely enjoyed learning in an informal, student-centered environment.

The Haystack Program: An Introduction

The Haystack program began circa 1982 at Portland State University. Under the auspices of community outreach, the program eventually became a two-week steelpan summer workshop with between 20 and 30 participants including music readers and non-readers, hobbyists and professionals (J. Leyden, personal communication, on-going, 2013).

James Leyden, a former high school choir and steel band director from Lancaster, New York, was the coordinator of the workshop. Well known in steel band circles, he had taken his

high school steel band on an overseas tour of Europe and performed at various MENC conferences. After moving to Oregon, Leyden decided to continue his steelpan work through these summer workshops. He purchased steelpans from a builder in San Francisco and began assembling a group of instructors.

Leyden enlisted the help of Andy and Jeff Narell, two professional steelpan performers, both of whom were highly regarded through their work in spreading the art form. Later, Leyden would add Tom Miller to the fold. Miller went on to start his own summer steelpan festival in Denver, the Pan Ramajay Summer Steelpan Festival, and is currently the steel band director at the University of Denver. These instructors also played significant roles in later summer steelpan workshops such as Meet Me in Morgantown, held annually in West Virginia and now known as the Festival of Steel.

Three strands comprised the Haystack program. They were: contemporary steel band playing with Andy and Jeff Narell, steel bands in educational settings with Jimmy Leyden, and steelpan building/tuning led by Ellie Mannette. The summer workshop culminated in a public performance along with presentations by Andy Narell and Ellie Mannette, which provided historical context to the workshop. Those participants working on building steelpans were sometimes able to take the instrument they built home with them as well as their knowledge of basic tuning skills back to their community.

The students working with Andy and Jeff Narell typically learned Latin and/or jazz inspired steel band music by ear. Those working with Leyden learned primarily from written notation on sheet music and performed more classical and folk arrangements. Some participants were able to experience both groups if they could master the music quickly enough.

While this program only lasted until 1989, it was one of the first opportunities for potential teachers, both in the community as well as the classroom, to have steelpan training from musicians/teachers that were well versed in teaching. Many professional players, hobbyists, teachers, and steelpan builders/tuners spent part of their early development attending these workshops. They included Jeannine Remy (University of the West Indies), Gary Gibson (professional pannist), Eugene Novotney (Humboldt State University), Michael Carney (CSU-Long Beach), Dave Berry (steelpan builder), Darren Duerden (BYU-Hawaii), Mat Britain (Vanderbilt University), Tim Peterman (Carolina Forest Elementary School), Darren Dyke (steelpan tuner), and Jim Munzenrider (CSM Panhandlers), among others.

Methods

Rationale for the Research Design

I chose a case study design for this study because it has “clear boundaries” (Creswell, 1998, p. 39). Specifically, the program lasted from circa 1982 to 1989. This study fits Stake’s (1995) definition of an instrumental study, as the purpose was to understand the importance and value of the Haystack program as a professional development opportunity and in the growth of the art form.

Data

I conducted interviews by email and by phone with nine former program participants and two instructors, Jeff Narell and Jimmy Leyden. With the consent of the interviewees, I recorded and later transcribed phone interviews. Each transcript was coded for prominent, recurring themes based on frequency of presentation. Additionally, I collected archival materials that included video recordings of culminating concerts and planning documents for the program.

Leyden provided video recordings of the culminating concerts via mail and sent scanned documents via e-mail. I corroborated data from these materials through interviews.

Using a purposive sample, I chose interviewees based upon their impact on the development of academic steel bands in the United States. Interviewees are not representative cases; however, they help illustrate the overarching impact of these types of professional opportunities on the art form. After initial conversations with other steel band directors, and through my own knowledge of the program, I constructed interview questions. Each Haystack participant interviewed was asked the following questions:

- What year(s) did you participate in the Haystack program?
- Who were the clinicians/presenters the year(s) you attended?
- What information was covered during your time participating in the Haystack program?
- What songs did you perform during your Haystack experience(s)?
- In what ways did your Haystack experience impact your steelpan performance?
- In what ways did your Haystack experience impact your steelpan tuning/building?
- In what ways did your Haystack experience impact your steelpan instruction?
- What was your most positive experience in the Haystack program? Why?
- What was your most negative experience in the Haystack program? Why?
- How might you be different had you not participated in the Haystack program?
- How might the field of steelpan been different without the program?

Each instructor interviewed was asked the following set of questions:

- What year(s) were you involved with the Haystack program?
- What information was covered during the years you were involved with the Haystack program?
- Please describe your general understanding of the purpose or mission of the Haystack program?
- What were the goals of your involvement in the Haystack program?
- How did the Haystack program impact the steelpan field?
- In what ways did the Haystack program impact you professionally?
- What was the general curriculum during your year(s) of involvement with Haystack?
- What was your most positive or rewarding experience related to your involvement with the Haystack program?
- What was your most negative experience related to your involvement with the Haystack program?

- How might you be different had you not been involved in the Haystack program?
- How might the field of steelpan been different without the program?
- What historical context for the steelpan was provided during the Haystack program?

Trustworthiness

Participants in the study provided consent to allow me to use their real names. This helped illustrate the historical impact of this case since many of these directors are prominent in the steel band world today. Applying the technique of member checks, each respondent had an opportunity to review the data they provided. Several kindly provided feedback on the entire article. Additionally, a colleague audited the study to ensure that I accounted for or removed any author biases. As the researcher, I am an insider to the steelpan community, and am active as a steel band director, performer, and music educator and therefore this was a concern.

The Importance of the Haystack Program: Introduction to Themes

Three recurring themes emerged from interviews with Haystack participants: the importance of networking, exploring modes of learning and musical creation, and the creation of access and capacity for steelpan in the United States. Eugene Novotney assessed the impact of the program, stating:

[Haystack] was a monumental and life-changing experience for me, and it guided me to make steelpan instruction a significant part of what I do as a university educator. I was exposed to authentic and current steelpan literature, expert soloists, and [Ellie Mannette], who dedicated his entire life to expanding the steelpan art form. It was a true and authentic inspiration for me to participate, and I would not be the same person had I not participated.

Many of the participants echoed this sentiment.

Theme 1: Networking

Networking with other steel band directors has been, and continues to be, critical to the development of the art form in the United States. Due to a lack of national steel band

organizations or conferences and the geographic isolation of many groups, networking at summer workshops became the main (if not sole) venue for professional development of steel band directors. While this aspect of the program was critically important, it was not the primary focus. Instead, bringing players and builders together from a variety of backgrounds was the main goal. Remy (1990) characterized the importance of the workshops in a more global way, stating, “[Haystack] was a cradle for young professionals in the pan world; however, we did not know it at the time. Many of us made steelpan our life.”

Many participants noted that networking provided a means to create future partnerships.

Darren Duerden explained:

The biggest impact has been the network that Haystack created. I met Ron Kerns and Shelly Irvine before they started Panyard [a steelpan building company], and Darren Dyke [a tuner] was just a beginner. I [also] met Tim Peterman, Mike Carney, and many others. I have also had Tom [Miller], Jeff [Narell], and Ray Holman to my campus in Hawaii as a result of Haystack.

Others stressed how different participants and instructors shared those new educational ideas.

For example:

I do think the program there impacted a wide and important range of people. Tom Miller’s involvement as a co-teacher doubtlessly paved a road for him to be the well-known instructor he is now. The directors who took part all walked away energized, with new music and ideas, which they then passed on to countless students. Haystack and programs like it have helped create the wider steelpan community in the U.S. Without programs like this there would be more isolation and less interaction and general sharing of knowledge and music. (Dyke)

Lastly, some participants noted that the workshop interactions left them feeling empowered to spread steel band. Darren Duerden emphasized the workshop’s importance to the spread of steel bands in the U.S.:

I think it was an inspirational springboard for many tuners and educators in America. Without it, I don't know if we would have Panyard [a pan building company], or Darren Dyke [a tuner]. Andy [Narell], Tom [Miller] and Jeff [Narell] [might not have been] nearly as strong of ambassadors. Additionally, many, many educators, including myself,

felt empowered to start and develop steel band programs. For me, I started the first professional steel band in Utah, taught five steel bands in Florida, two in Mississippi, and now have the only steel band in Hawaii. It was certainly a turning point for me.

The networking opportunities were the genesis of relationships that have endured over time.

Theme 2: Modes of Musical Learning and the Process of Music Creation

The Narell brothers and Leyden provided the participants with a wealth of different pedagogical approaches and strategies to employ when teaching their own groups. Examples included learning completely by ear to learning from fully arranged charts:

I learned from Andy [Narell] that ‘real musicians’ could learn both by reading and by rote. I learned the Trinidadian methodology of teaching, and got to see some of the finest players in the world at work. This has been a model for me for my career. The connections with people who became a ‘who's who’ of instructors in the steel band field [were so important]. I still meet up with them at the percussion convention and realize that Haystack had a far-reaching effect. (Duerden)

Andy and Jeff Narell, in particular, challenged participants to work outside of their comfort zone. They taught many of the Narells’ charts by rote (both visually and aurally). These experiences broadened many participants’ ideas about pedagogy and had a direct impact on K-12 and collegiate directors:

It inspired me to make steel band education a large part of what I was offering at Humboldt State University, and also, it taught me that both learning by rote and learning through reading music are both valid ways of instruction. This experience helped me significantly when I traveled to Trinidad to play in Panorama for the first time in 1993, where all of the learning was by rote and by ear. (Novotney)

Darren Dyke agreed that learning by rote helped his confidence and ability to learn new music:

I learned that I could learn quickly, memorize music taught by rote and not forget it. It gave me confidence in the process of rote learning and teaching. I saw and internalized the teaching process that was used by Andy and Jeff [Narell].

Michel Bento noted that the instructors found ways to push the performers “comfort zone” by challenging them to learn new material in new ways:

[Andy Narell] pushed us and taught us by rote and we really worked on it. [He created a special small ensemble for the more advanced players]. Jeff Narell instructed us on percussion. His work with us was fun [and he] taught us about African, Brazilian, Latin and Caribbean percussion grooves, as well as playing pan. We laughed with him and learned from him in a positive, fun way.

In summary, these opportunities placed directors outside their individual comfort zone and challenged them to re-examine their pedagogy. The strategies provided gave directors concrete tools to teach their ensembles.

Theme 3: Creating Capacity and Access for the Art Form

Lastly, one of the major focuses of the Haystack workshop was to create access and capacity for steel bands in the United States. Because there were only a handful of steelpan builders and tuners in the United States at the time, it was difficult to obtain new steelpans to start new groups. Additionally, it was difficult to keep the pans serviced and tuned. Mannette aimed to remedy this by showing the basics of building and tuning to participants at the workshop and later started his own apprenticeship program at the University of West Virginia.

Gary Gibson summarized the process:

We were given raw barrels to work with, and we all showed up with our own set of hammers (which I still own and use). Ellie took us through the whole process.

Dave Beery, owner of Smartypans, notes how important this time was for him:

Haystack was extremely influential in my eventual pan-tuning career in that I saw and understood Ellie's lectures and tuning examples. I could hear the harmonics and was fascinated by his pans. I took one of his pan building booklets home with me that had all of the note shapes, dimensions, and layouts. I didn't use the booklet for a year or two. Eventually, the booklet was my bible in how to sink, shape, and make pans in general.

Mannette's zeal for passing on his steelpan building skills and steelpan history did not go unnoticed by participants:

Ellie just continued to help as many students as he could and I think we all felt honored and appreciative of any lessons and ideas we could wean from him. He was generous with his time, encouraging, and full of information and stories. We would gather around

him as he tuned and he would share his stories of growing up, building drums, Trinidad, etc. and we ate it all up. He was a true gentleman and inspiring teacher. (Bento)

Mannette is currently working in Morgantown and his impact on the school and university steel bands is on going. Without Mannette's work in this regard many of the steel bands in the United States would not exist.

In the following section, I make recommendations to the field based on the themes noted in this study. Additionally, I provide suggestions for future research that will enhance professional development opportunities for steel band directors.

Reflections and Recommendations

The Haystack Steelpan Workshops provided a compelling case that illuminated the intersections of school/university ensembles and community music. Portland State University hosted the workshops as an outreach program. Leyden, a former high school music teacher, along with professional musicians, provided steelpan instruction to a variety of participants including hobbyists, other professionals, aspiring teachers, active teachers, and aspiring steelpan builders and tuners.

The participants involved in this program have continued to create several steelpan building companies, have become prominent tuners, and spread the art form to K-12 and collegiate programs. For those who became educators, many applied rote methods just as the Narell brothers taught them during this workshop. Additionally, they encountered a diversity of musical literature through the balance between Leyden's more classical approach and the Narell's contemporary steelpan music. Haskett (forthcoming, 2015) found that literature selection was a prominent challenge for inexperienced steel band directors. Additionally, it is increasingly important that steel band directors, particularly inexperienced ones, continue to learn rehearsal strategies through experiential learning from the performer's perspective and as a

director. Since Haystack, it has become commonplace to invite guest clinicians to work with ensembles and form mass steel bands that enable collaboration with other directors or clinicians.

While this case is compelling on its own, the implications of this model of professional development have a far-reaching impact on the development of current steelpan festivals and the development of new learning opportunities for steel band directors. The networking aspect of this case is particularly important. As with many U.S. world music ensembles, steel bands are isolated from each other. The main source of professional development during this time period for steel band directors would have been these workshops along with listening to steel band recordings. There were no books or instructional videos on teaching steel band available and the director arranged most music that was used as steel band publishing companies were not yet in existence; Haystack gave directors a means to encounter literature and learn how effective steel band instruction looks. While there has been an increase in resources and online communities for steel band directors more recently, networking is still a primary component that directors need in order to reach their potential. Haskett's (2015, forthcoming) study bears out the striking importance of networking as part of each director's professional learning network.

These yearly professional development opportunities provided steelpan players and directors an opportunity to play in ensembles, which is rare for working professionals, when many directors are isolated from each other. Learning in an ensemble environment informs directors of the needs of their students as they encounter challenges in their own playing.

Additionally, Haystack participants had access to Ellie Mannette, who provided historical information on the steelpan, stories about its development, and information/demonstrations on steelpan building and tuning. These experiences allowed directors to take information back to the ensembles they directed and teach the music in context. Fledgling builders and tuners greatly

benefitted from Mannette sharing information about his building and tuning process, thereby allowing for increased access to the art form. During the 1980s, there were far too few tuners and builders to meet the need in the U.S., and this is still the situation today. Experiences like this might be reincorporated into professional development opportunities to address this need. In the following section, I note future areas of research that could help to provide a well-informed basis for reforming professional development opportunities for music educators that direct world music ensembles in the schools.

Important Areas for Future Research

Further studies are needed to examine professional development opportunities for steel band directors and directors of other non-traditional ensembles. Frequently, opportunities for exposure to these ensembles occur at the state music educators' conference in the form of concerts; however, few true development opportunities exist in these venues. Lastly, international entities such as the Percussive Arts Society need to continue to develop support structures for steel bands in the U.S.; the historical impact of the organization on U.S. steel bands should be studied in a scholarly manner as the group helped provide exposure for the steelpan to other percussionists.

Appendix I: Resources for Steel Band Directors

Books

Nurse, M. (2007). *Unheard voices: The rise of steelband and calypso in the Caribbean and North America*. New York, NY: iUniverse.

Tanner, C. (2007). *The steel band game plan: Strategies for starting, building, and maintaining your pan program*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Volk, T. (2004). *Music, education, and multiculturalism: Foundations and principles*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Videos

Alive! by Andy Narell
<http://myiesstore.com/andynarell/>

Hammer on Steel by the University of Akron Steel Band
<http://www.uasteelband.com/proddetail.asp?prod=DVD>

Websites

Steel Band Directors' Facebook Group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/steelbanddirector/>

U.S. K-12 and Collegiate Steel Band Directory
<https://blhaskett.wordpress.com/steelpan-research/>

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