

The Helen Carswell Chair in Community Engaged Research in the Arts

Final Reports - 2018

Steelpan Development at Regent Park School of Music (RPSM)

Anthony Salah Wilson

What is this research about?

Finding out why is there a lack of interest, enthusiasm, and low recruitment in the steelpan programs at RPSM. Whether there are other factors affecting the general growth and development. Whether the programs had plateaued? Providing information and or suggestions that may lead to solutions towards enhancing growth and development.

What did the researcher do?

Investigated the programs at their locations; observed the systems of teaching of the programs; paid attention to the repertoire taught and the level of the students; defined the pros and cons of the systems in place; identified short terms and long terms solutions; suggested adequate repertoire to accommodate the different levels of students abilities; alerted the administration of the need to have the steelpan instruments tuned up; presented a new concept of intergenerational program at one of the locations; offered ideas of a training program for steelpan teachers; introduced a concept of combining “note and rote” learning; developed outreach program of advertising and recruiting on social media.

What did the researcher find?

More than one instructor was needed for a class due to the length of the class and abilities of the students and teachers. Some classes needed additional instructors to accommodate special needs students. The repertoires needed an upgrade to keep the students interested and engaged the intergenerational program introduced attracted a cross-section of people from all backgrounds and ages. The introduction of “note and rote” learning was an asset in this group as many were musically illiterate, while some were literate. Many who attended this intergenerational steelpan program were informed through the outreach recruitment on social media. An array of music scores of various genres arranged for steelpan ensembles was provided for the RPSM and aided in achieving the necessary goals. Some of

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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the steelpan were eventually tuned-up, but more needed to be done. Information and tickets were provided for the RPSM administration to attend and experience the 2019 annual Caribbean steelpan festival in Toronto and they attended.

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.

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