

Contrast STEELBAND



The Leicester Contrast Steel band was formed in 1974 by the creative visitation of George Fisher, the then Home School Liaison Officer, in the Highfields area of Leicester..

The band originally developed as a community band, recruiting children from a number of schools within the area. A few schools at that time, mainly junior schools, possessed their own pans. Based at the Highfields Community Centre, some 500 children from a variety of backgrounds, and racial groupings, were instructed and guided under the ever watchful and inventive, Cy Jacques, the tutor of the band fondly referred to as 'Mr Contrast'. The band grew from strength to strength under the auspices of CY who worked closely with the late Michael 'Natsy' Contant, who was responsible for making the majority of their pans. They have toured all over Europe with their wide repertoire and even performed for the Queen on her visit to Leicester.



After thirty-two years, Contrast is very active and is still based in Highfields but now at the African Caribbean Centre. They are the only professional full steel band in Leicestershire and still provide tuition throughout schools but on a much wider scale, visiting most of the primary, junior, secondary, high schools and colleges throughout the Leicestershire area and sometimes further afield. They remain a voluntary community band still touring, participating in exchange programmes, delivering workshops and performing at various venues including festivals, carnivals, fetes, weddings and parties.

The main band currently has twenty-five members whose ages range between twelve and thirty plus. Cy retired and emigrated to St Kitts and Nevis in July 2002, where he continues to teach the steel pan art form in schools. Cy left the running of Contrast in the more than capable hands of

his protégé, Pat Munroe, a pupil of his from the age of nine. Pat has worked closely with Cy, as a member of the band and then as an assistant instructor from school leaving age. At present, she is the bandleader and manages Contrast whilst co-ordinating and instructing the pan world throughout Leicestershire.

Players from Contrast have taken part in National Panorama competition on numerous occasions when they performed with Phase 1 from Coventry and Eclipse from London.

They also participated in the first European Steel Pan Festival at La Villette in Paris and profess to be the first steel band to perform in the Rotterdam Carnival's Battle of The Drums. Contrast is hoping to take on more competitions and shows in their own name in the future and is planning a tour to Ireland for the St Patrick's Day celebrations in March 07.

For further information and bookings, please contact Pat on 07814563958 or contrast@panpodium.com

by Pat Munroe

