



Royal Bank

NEWS

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RBC Redemption Sound Setters have a ‘Nice Time’

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, January 23, 2018 – With the sweet symphony of steelpan music complementing the enchanting ambiance of Bethel, the pannists of RBC Sound Setters Steel Orchestra demonstrated their versatility and dexterity when they performed for Pan Trinbago’s judges during the Tobago leg of the preliminary round of the National Panorama Large Bands category, which took place at their pan yard on Sunday, January 21.

The band was out in full tempo from early in the afternoon, fine-tuning their rendition of calypsonian Arrow’s hit from 1984, “Nice Time”. It was a picture of focus and determination as arranger, Michael Toby, took the team through their paces under the watchful eyes of the band’s Chief Executive Officer, Al Percy; Manager Cecil Phillips, as well as band captain, Marie Toby, who also happens to be his mother. Marie is one of the first woman to hold this position in any national steel band.

According to Phillips, “This band was formed in 1988 and we have made tremendous strides since then. We started off as a small band and today, we are the only remaining representatives of Tobago in Panorama Large Band category. We are proud of being the standard bearer for the island. A lot of our success is because of our investment in developing talent through our youth academy. We believe that our development and performance over the years is a demonstration of this cherished investment.”

Twelve-year old Bishop’s High School student, Arnile Hackett, is the quintessence of this approach. “I started off during the vacation classes two years ago and now I play tenor with the band. What really fascinates me is the fact that so many different musical tones and textures combine to create one beautiful sound. I think that is a lesson about life that we could all learn. Playing music has helped me in terms of discipline and dedication and also with Maths and other subjects in school. I am confident that we will win Panorama this year and when we do, I hope to see even more young people join the band,” enthused young Hackett.

Front and centre, supporting the band at the preliminary stage, were members of staff of the Tobago Branch of RBC Royal Bank. After the judging was completed, they interacted with the band and even learned a thing or two about playing the steelpan.

“At RBC we recognise that we have a role to play in our community, which can range from a small village to the national perspective. This is especially true in terms of youth development as it relates to

education and arts and culture. I can tell you first-hand that the young people from this band display immense respect and discipline and that is something we should recognise, applaud and emulate. We have students that come to the pan yard after school; do their homework and then practise. We aren't only helping to make better pan players, we are developing a cadre of young people who will grow to be productive citizens and take Trinidad and Tobago forward," explained RBC Tobago Branch Manager Claude Cedenio.

Affectionately called 'The Pride of Bethel', RBC Sound Setters has the full support of the community which came out in full force, young and old, to support the band at the preliminary judging. Arranger Toby has been with the band since he was six years old and trained under former arranger, Winston Gordon, taking over the reins in 2013 to orchestrate their journey into the future.

"Having spent 27 years with this band, I can tell you that we are shining examples to Tobago. We have deep roots and this is especially true for me as there are three generations of the Toby family currently playing in the band. Built on a strong foundation, we are always attracting young people from all over Tobago, especially through our vacation music camps, where we unearth and develop young talent.

The unconditional investment in young people is already paying dividends since RBC Redemption Sound Setters Steel Orchestra has been a participant in the National Panorama Finals eight times in the last decade. The band has dominated the Tobago House of Assembly's (THA) Pan Champs, winning 10 times in the last 13 years. The orchestra has also represented Trinidad and Tobago on the global stage, having performed in Washington DC, Baltimore and Delaware in the USA, as well as in Germany and Wales.