

Humboldt Calypso Band Study Guide



Humboldt Calypso Band

Founded in 1986 by Dr. Eugene Novotney, the Humboldt State Calypso Band was the first ensemble of its kind in the entire California State University system. The Humboldt State Calypso Band is a 100% acoustic group comprised of an orchestra of steel drums, or more correctly, steelpans, as they are known by tis name in the Caribbean.

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BEFORE THE SHOW

What do students need to know before the performance?

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DURING THE SHOW

How should I act as an audience member?

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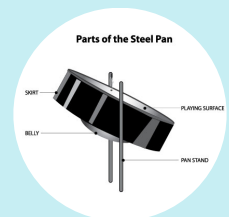
AFTER THE SHOW

How was I inspired?



A great beat

Steel drum music uses "syncopated" rhythms that are a little unexpected and fun to dance to!



Types of drums

There are five main types of steel pans or drums



Music from trash

Steel drums are made and tuned by hand out of old oil drums.

BEFORE THE SHOW

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The Humboldt Calypso Band prides itself in maintaining an accurate and authentic connection to the roots of the steelband movement and the innovative musicians of Trinidad & Tobago, the

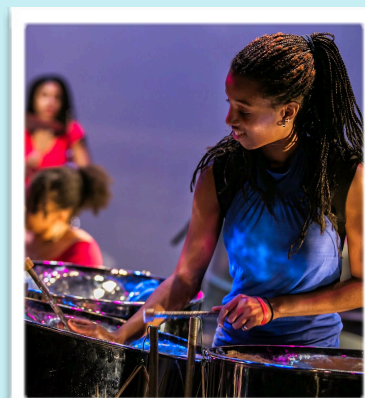


Caribbean island nation that created and developed this unique percussion phenomenon. Many of the Humboldt State Calypso Bands' steelpans are built by Clifford Alexis, a Trinidad native living in the United States. The band is dedicated to the performance of traditional and contemporary music from the Caribbean, Africa, Brazil, and the USA. The indigenous "Calypso" and "Soca" music performed by the Humboldt State Calypso Band represents the true voice of steelband music in the Caribbean, and steelband arrangements from Trinidad & Tobago greatly influence the group's repertoire and instrumentation.

Over its 30+ years of existence, the Humboldt State Calypso Band has developed a relationship with some of Trinidad & Tobago's most important steelband composers, most notably Ray Holman & Len "Boogie" Sharpe, who have written many of the arrangements and original scores that the group performs. Some alumni of the group have traveled to the Caribbean, where they performed in the National Panorama Competition during Trinidad's famous Carnival celebration, and performed in some of the best steelbands in the world, such as the Phase II Pan Groove, the Invaders, Starlift, the Hummingbird Pan Groove, and others. Other alumni have gone on to lead steelbands in communities, in public schools, at colleges and universities, and professionally throughout the United States.

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

- [This fifteen minute film](#) shows city life in Trinidad in the during the early years of steel drum instruments.
- [This is an excellent brief history](#) of the steel drum instrument told through the life story of one of its founders, Ellie Mannette.
- [This website](#) provides a free online steel drum simulator.
- [Information about the Humboldt Calypso Band](#)



HISTORY CONNECTIONS

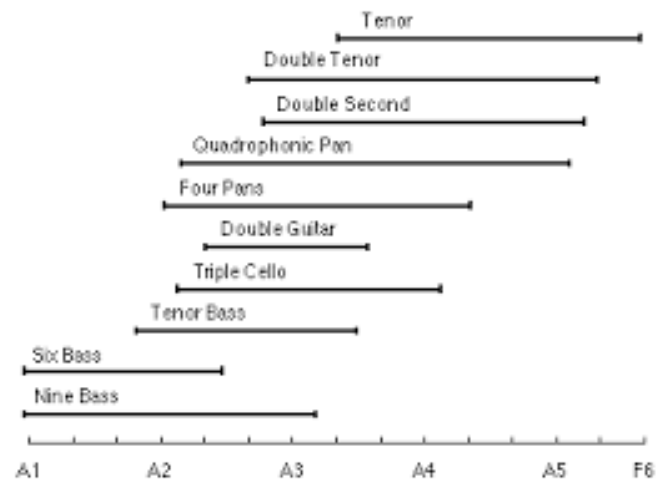
Steel pans (steel drums) were created on the Caribbean island of Trinidad in the 1930s, but steel pan history can be traced back to the enslaved Africans who were brought to the islands during the 1700s. They carried with them elements of their African culture including the playing of hand drums. These drums became the main percussion instruments in the annual Trinidadian carnival festivities.

[This video](#) shows how the steel drum is made.



TYPES OF DRUMS

There are 5 different types of steel pans in the Calypso Band, all representing a specific musical range, and all serving a different function in the music that the band plays. The largest drums in the band are the “Bass” pans, and they are the size of a full-sized 55-gallon oil barrel. It takes 6-bass pans to complete a full set, and there are only 3-notes on each barrel because there notes are so large to enable them to produce the very low tones of the bass range. As one may expect, the bass pans serve the bass function in the band providing the band with it harmonic foundation. The next largest drums are the “cello” pans, and they are about the size of a 55-gallon oil barrel cut in half. It takes 3-cello pans to complete



a full set, and each barrel has 8-notes giving the entire set a range of almost 2-octaves. The cello pans function to provide a low harmonic element to the steel band and often also play low melodic countermeasures that support the harmony. The next instruments in the range are the “double seconds” pans, and they represent the mid-range voice in the steel band. It takes two drums to complete a set a double seconds, and each drum is about 1/3 the size of a full size 55-gallon barrel. Each barrel has 14-notes giving the entire set a range of over 2-octaves. Te double second pans function to provide the harmonic chords in the musical arrangements, and

often play “strumming” patterns that one would normally expect to hear on an instrument like a guitar. The “double tenor” pans are the next instrument up in the range, and they are basically identical to the double seconds pans in construction, but have a different function in the band. The double tenor pans often play melodic lines and countermeasures, and also, often play accented punches like a horn section in a jazz band. The highest pitched instrument in the steel band is the “tenor” pan, often also called the “lead” pan. The tenor pan is formed from a single 55-gallon oil barrel with the skirt of the barrel cut off leaving only about 20% of the skirt remaining. The high-pitched notes on the tenor pan are quite small compared to the other steel pans, and there are typically as many as 29-notes on the one single barrel. The tenor pans play the primary melody in the arrangements, and they serve as the “soprano” voice in the steelband's range. Together, the five unique instruments in the steelband function together like the string section of a symphony orchestra, after which they were modeled.

DURING THE SHOW

2

The audience is an important and integral part of a live performance. Being a good audience member requires that students sit quietly and act appreciatively as well as appropriately. Students need to understand that when they are attentive during a performance they will benefit and understand better what is being presented, and that appropriate behavior in a live theatre setting supports the performer. Teachers who model joyful active participation notice their students often follow their lead and enjoy the show more enthusiastically.

Points to discuss

Shhh! A live performance is not television, a movie, a video game or a computer. Real people are on the stage. This means no talking (unless asked to do so by the performers), or chewing gum.

React. Laugh, smile, applaud and cry as appropriate. Some performances may involve audience participation so students and teachers should be prepared to behave as directed by the artists on stage.

Lights. When the lights in the theatre start to fade this means the show is about to begin. You should be sitting quietly in your seat before the theatre



is totally dark. If you are in the theatre lobby and you see that lights are flashing, this means return to your seat immediately.

Seating. It is respectful to keep your feet on the floor and sit quietly. It is not respectful to kick other seats or put your feet on them.

Cell phone. Students and teachers, turn it off; “vibrate” doesn’t count. A cell phone’s screen is really bright in a dark theatre. Never let your screen come on.

Snacks. Food and drinks are not allowed in the theatre.

Applaud. You should clap at:

- The end of a single song
- The end of the entire performance

Restroom. Use the restroom before the show or during intermission. If it’s an emergency, quietly ask your teacher if you may go.



The following are suggestions for how to develop appropriate and respectful audience behaviors in students:

Teach empathy and respect through role-play

Ask for several student volunteers to play the part of the performers, and work with them to find something to perform - a poem to recite, rhythm instruments to play, or a song that they like off the radio. Ask them to go outside the room, while you talk with the class.



Tell the class that they are going to be part of an experiment. When the performers come in, their job is to not pay attention. They should not get silly, but they can talk to one another, move their bodies in their seats, and not make eye contact.

Have the volunteers come in and perform. After a few minutes, stop and ask the performers to share how it felt to not have people paying attention. Then discuss what

being a good audience looks like (for young students, a Yes/No chart is helpful), referring to a rubric or set of school rules as appropriate. Then practice as a class by having the same volunteers leave the room and come in to a respectful audience. When done, have the performers reflect on how it was a different experience, and have students share what they noticed this time about the performance that they didn't the first time. Point out specific behaviors that various students displayed.

Rehearse audience behavior often, and explicitly point out positive examples. Starting a weekly tradition where you host an open mic for even 15 minutes of student performing and audience practice, doing show and tell, or partnering with a fellow teacher to put on performances/share the latest from the classroom while practicing audience behaviors will all build skills and stamina.

Develop a rubric for being an expert audience

As a class develop a routine for getting student attention and signaling audience behavior, as well as a rubric that connects to your school's code of conduct.

Example:

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Bodies	Few bodies are under control and sitting tall Few students give supportive applause at the end of the performance	Most bodies are under control and sitting tall Some students give supportive applause at the end of the performance	All bodies are under control and sitting tall All students give supportive applause at end of performance
Voices	Many students are talking	Some students are talking	No students are talking
Attention	It takes 10 or more seconds to come to attention Focus and attention is not sustained during performance	It takes 5 – 10 seconds to come to attention Focus and attention somewhat sustained during performance	Students takes less than 5 seconds to come to attention Focus and attention is well sustained during performance

3

AFTER THE SHOW

Following are suggestions for reflection, follow-up and integrated activities.

1. In discussing a performance, it is often more productive to ask the question “What did you see/hear?” or “What do you remember most about the concert?” or “What do you think it meant (and why)” rather than “Did you like the performance?” The first three questions lead to observation and interpretation of the performance, encouraging recall of details, while the fourth question encourages more judgmental responses. Discussion of which aspects of a performance remain in one’s memory often reveals the themes at the center of a work.
2. Have students describe a memorable moment from the performance in various ways such as verbally, in writing, by drawing, or through movement. Ask students if the performance differed from what they expected. What kind of feeling or mood did your students have during the performance? Discuss other kinds of dance and music. Has music or dance ever evoked any other emotions in your students? Before the performance, make sure to inform students that you will be completing this exercise so they can pay close attention to important details.
3. Gather pots and pans and arrange them so they make an interesting musical scale or melody. Glass bottles with different amounts of liquids make great instruments too. Try hitting them with different items. What items make good drumming tools? Create an original song and perform it for others.
4. If there are aspects of the performance that students did not understand discuss it or prompt them to do research and share what they learned with the class.
5. Visual art connection. Pick a favorite steel drum song and think about the colors, shapes, lines and patterns that the music inspires in your mind. Paint an abstract painting for this song.

