## COMPOSITION PORTFOLIO

by

## SYLVESTER APPOLLIS

submitted in partial fulfilment ( $33 \%$ ) of the requirements for the degree of MASTERS OF MUSIC in the DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC AND MUSICOLOGY
at

RHODES UNIVERSITY

SUPERVISOR: PROF A TRACEY CO-SUPERVISOR: PROF M DUBY

DECEMBER 2010

- Acknowledgments Page ii
- Reflexive Document ..... Page l
- Movement 1 notes - Heavy Metal ..... Page 3
- Movement 2 notes - Caribbean Essence ..... Page 6
- Movement 3 notes - African Minuet ..... Page 8
- Movement 4 notes - Battle of the Pans ..... Page 10
- Movement 5 notes - Gentle Breeze ..... Page 14
- Movement 1 score - Heavy Metal ..... Page 16
- Movement 2 score - Caribbean Essence ..... Page 36
- Movement 3 score - African Minuet ..... Page 71
- Movement 4 score - Battle of the Pans ..... Page 90
- Movement 5 score - Gentle Breeze ..... Page 137

I would like to thank my family for their support during my Masters studies. You were always there when I needed advice and direction. I thank my supervisors, Prof. Tracey and Prof. Duby for their knowledge and input into this paper, as well as Dr. Brukman and Dr. Ramana for the final motivation and help in completing the portfolio. I also thank everyone who has guided, supported and shared their knowledge with me during my research in steelband arranging. I believe this document will be useful to educators and students in both school and tertiary institutions within South Africa and internationally.

As a steelband teacher of both ensemble and solo music work, it has become more obvious that there are almost no music arrangements composed specifically for steelbands in South Africa. Most steelbands struggle to arrange music for bands as there are not many arrangements available for teachers to use as references or examples. In addition to this, the arrangements that are available are very simple in their melodies, harmonies and rhythms. This means that most steelbands in the country are not able to advance to a level that could be considered as being world class. My aim in this portfolio is to illustrate how different steelband ensembles can be used to express a variety of compositional techniques through contrast, imitation, repetition, tone color, dynamics, form and style.

In September 2010, the Department of Education released their new CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) document for all the school subjects in South Africa. In the Further Education and Training phase of subject music, steelband arrangement can be placed in two of the sub-categories. These are Music Literacy and Technology.

- In Music Literacy component, learners are required to complete various exercises in music theory and music harmony. Factors like scales, key and time signatures, melodic construction, harmonic analysis, transcription and transposition are included. All these music areas form part of the requirements in creating a steelband arrangement or composition. - In Technology, learners have to express their arrangements and compositions through the use of technology. This must then also be applied to the practical performance. Learners would therefore learn how to use music writing software and studio equipment to record and make a record of their arrangements and composition. Through these software programmes, learners will be able to set out their ensembles and the parts or voices required to form them. This also makes printing of sheet music and making changes in the music a lot easier.

Ensemble performance also fonns a crucial part of the performance component for school learners. Here they can develop important performance skills while working with other musicians through playing different parts such as melody, accompanying harmony, rhythm or bass parts. They learn to co-exist among other players. When performing music that is not composed specifically for steelband it is often a challenge to create effects that resemble the
original intended composition. A big factor in this area is the timbre or color of sounds that can be created or expressed on the steelpan instrument. The instrument is after-all part of the percussion family. In the first movement of my portfolio, 'Heavy Metal', the bass instruments of the ensemble are used in a more percussive rather than harmonic manner. The pan-roundneck ensemble used in this movement, make use of the first recognized steelband instruments that developed from the rhythmic percussive instruments like bass and conga drums.

During the various movements I make use of different combinations and sizes of ensembles. Movement 2, 'Caribbean Essence', can be seen as a 'steel quartet', with only the four primary instruments (also the most common instruments available in South Africa) being used. A group of at least ten players (two per voice part) are used in Movement 3, 'African Minuet'. This is the average size of many school steelbands in the country. It will be nearly impossible to gather a 120 piece steelband in South African, but the amount voices used in Movement 4, 'Battle of the Pans', is easily manageable. The power of sound of an ensemble of this size would be heard some distance away. But, with skilled performers, it is still possible for a steelband of this size to play at a very soft dynamic level. The fifth and final movement, 'Gentle Breeze', expresses the versatility of the instrument as a solo act. From playing balanced counter-point harmonies to flowing melodies and arpeggios, the performer has the ability to create both suspense and anticipation for the audience.

Although the main focus of the compositions are the steelpan instruments, it must be emphasized that the backing percussion instruments or 'engine room' play an equally important role in maintaining the groove and drive or momentum of the ensemble. This is illustrated extensively in the fourth movement.

With numerous steelbands and solo steelpan performers emerging in the country I am hoping more composers will compose specifically for steelpan and steelband. The technical limitations and confines include techniques of playing, tempo of pieces, styles that should be used and techniques of creating different sounds and colors. This portfolio is therefore a guide for school teachers, particularly those teaching steelband, to use as part of the school music syllabus as a performance, compositional and arrangement tool.

## Description of composition:

The title of the piece plays on the setup of the ensemble, a 6 voice pan-round-neck steelband. Pan-round-neck bands are the first recognized steelband groups that emerged after the invention of the instrument, during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The ensemble is made up of a number of single drum instruments, hung from the players' necks and used mostly in parades and road marches. The bands make use of numerous percussion instruments to create the groove and rhythmic drive.

This composition uses 3 lead instruments (Small Tenor, Tenor and Low Tenor), 2 harmony instruments (Single Second and Single Guitar) and a Single Bass (using 6 notes: G, A, B, C, D and E ). The Du-dup is a 2 note drum that is used as a rhythm instrument. It mimics a conga drum part. Contrary to the title, the piece is quite lyrical and in the key of G Major. It makes use of a typical calypso groove and rhythm, with a medium tempo of about 100 foot beats per minute.

A percussion groove is used to introduce the piece before the tremolo pans crescendo to the main melody at section A. The leads play the main melody while the harmony and bass instruments play a calypso backing groove. Section B is the second part of the main melody and starts with a short call-and-response interlude between the lead and backing instruments. Section C , the third part of the main melody, can be seen as a link or build up to the next section. The last 2 bars create a rhythmic anticipation for the following section.

An 8 bar open solo section D allows the lead players to improvise on a chord sequence used during the piece. Pan-round-neck solos can be very virtuosic and creative. The section closes with another rhythmic punch and leads into section E . This section sees the percussion parts emphasized in a percussion solo while the pans play staggered rhythms on top.

The pans play their tremolo crescendo again, this time leading into section B and then C . The whole piece is repeated from the first A section. This is a typical form used by many marching or parading pan-round-neck steelbands in order to increase the length or duration of
playing time for the composition. The piece is completed by a recapitulation of section $A$, followed by a dramatic sequence of chromatic phrases and a final punch to end the piece.

## Technical considerations:

The piece has been written with Grade 5 level performers in mind. The composition requires the lead performers to play improvised solos over an 8 bar calypso riff that includes basic chords of the G Major key. This makes the lead instruments the most technically demanding instruments in this ensemble. Pan-round-neck open solos or 'pan ramajays' as they are more commonly referred to in Trinidad, generally allow performers to follow the chord sequence and rhythmic basis of the backing groove. Most solos are very expressive and performers enjoy playing fast running passages to impress the audiences. These passages are usually chromatic in nature while still following the chord progression.

The backing groove should be provided by the harmony instruments of the ensemble through the use of both rhythm and harmony. The biggest challenge faced by performers in this section is to keep the momentum of the harmonies flowing through common calypso rhythms that can become more complex at increased tempo. The rhythms should be precise and uniform in order to create clarity from the harmonies. The bass instruments in the ensemble are closely linked to the accompanying percussion instruments. The reason for this is mainly because the bass has a very limited musical range and can only play with certain harmonies. They usually only play the root of each chord. Performers of bass instruments should be able to alternate between on-beat and syncopated rhythmic patterns with ease.

## Ensemble considerations:

The pan-round-neck ensemble should have a base instrument to unify or keep the ensemble together. This instrument is usually one of the percussion instruments like the cowbell, brake drum or wood-block. It is not uncommon for one of the steelpan instruments to take control of this responsibility. The best instrument to use would be either the Du-dup or the Single Bass. While playing, performers have to listen to the surrounding parts in order to follow the layout and progression of the composition. Through listening to each other the performers should be able to create a mellow and relaxed calypso groove. If this is not achieved the
ensemble will pull apart and struggle to settle. Ensembles also have the added challenge of carrying the instruments while performing.

## Despcription of composition:

The piece uses a small ensemble of 4 voices (essentially soprano, alto, tenor and bass) with very light percussion. It is a slow ballade style composition but uses elements of cha-cha, tango and reggae styles.

The overall form of the piece is Rondo.
|A
|B
|A
IC
|A
$\left.\begin{array}{lllllll}\text { Intro. } & \mid A & B & \mid C & \mid A & B & \mid D\end{array} \right\rvert\,$

A short introduction leads into section A which is in G Major. This section uses a cha-cha style in its backing rhythms for the pans and percussion. The Double Second part plays mostly counter-melodies to the flowing lead melody. Section $B$ continues on from $A$ with the cha-cha style but the melody is slightly more chromatic. The Double Second and Double Guitar harmony parts play unison rhythms.

After the repetition of these two sections, a short interlude leads to section $C$ which is in $G$ minor and uses a fast tango style. The interlude is emphasized with the use of a strong bass part. In section $C$ the Tenor and Double Guitar parts imitate each other by exchanging parts in a call-and-response conversation. The Double Second part plays a simple flowing, underlying support part. A short link takes the piece back to section $A$ and $B$ in $G$ Major.

An abrupt sforzatto stop signals the start of section D and a key change to C Major. This section is based on a slow reggae style as seen in the off-beat rhythms played by the Double Guitars. It takes the form of a repeated riff pattern which eventually ends with a unison offbeat punch that changes the piece to $G$ Major. The final section $A$ is a short recapitulation and leads into a brief coda.

## Technical considerations:

The composition requires performers to be able to express smooth and flowing phrases while performing specific styles and genres. The piece is not very rhythmically demanding and could be compared to an equivalent Grade 4 level using the ABRSM or Trinity College syllabi. Technically the most challenging aspect of the composition are the changes between sections. These changes require performers to change between various tempi and styles. Another element that is employed throughout the composition is the use of various dynamic levels. These dynamics provides the expression and color of the composition. The dynamics also distinguish and separate the different sections.

## Ensemble considerations:

The demanding tempo and rhythmic changes between sections make this a challenge for most steelband ensembles. Here only four individual parts are involved, making it crucial that each performer is be precise with the stops and punches. Change-over sections have to be tight and together in order to execute the tempo and stylistic changes correctly. The quartet is backed by percussion but melodically the steelpan instruments are on their own. Each performer is separately responsible for each individual part. Again it is essential that the performers in the ensemble listen to each other in order create a uniform sound. The sound that should be produced from this ensemble should resemble a string quartet performing a soft and flowing composition.

## Description of composition:

The piece is in ternary form, similar to the classical Minuet and Trio. It is set in $6 / 8$ and $3 / 4$ time signatures. The $6 / 8$ time signature sets up a typical African style through its use of interlocking parts and rhythms, hence the title African Minuet. The ensemble is made up of 5 voices. Tenor, Double Tenor, Double Second, Double Guitar and Six Bass.
|A
|B
|A

Intro. |:A B A $\mid$ C $\quad \mathrm{D} \quad \mathrm{E} \quad|\mathrm{A} \quad \mathrm{B} \quad:|$

The introduction of the piece gives each instrument the opportunity to enter at different entry points. Although these entries are measured and clearly planned clearly, traditional African styles allow performers to enter spontaneously. Section A of the minuet include letters A, B and A. This section is set in C Major and uses an African style of polyphonic interaction in the backing parts. During letter B there are some unison punches in the backing parts. The Double Tenor plays mainly in octaves lower than the melody line, which is in the Tenor part. A short link slows the music down and modulates to A minor.

Section $B$ of the piece is in the key of $A$ minor. This section includes letters $C, D$ and $C$ and uses a $3 / 4$ time signature which is characteristic of classical minuets. The section imitates a waliz style. The two melody voices play mostly interlocking rhythms and appear to gradually get faster through the use of diminution (smaller note values). The backing parts do the exact opposite of this movement by increasing the length of their note values.

The piece then returns to section A but only letters A and B are played. Letter B closes off with a short ending phrase and unison double stroke punch. The entire piece is repeated with variations mainly in melody, rhythms and harmony. Most of the repeated parts focus on the percussion and rhythm section.

This composition focuses mainly on rhythm and interaction between different voice parts. The African $6 / 8$ style places specify emphasis on interlocking rhythms at fast tempi. The rhythms used require performers to be at a minimum Grade 6 level of performance. However it should be stressed that the performance of the interlocking parts as an ensemble creates most of the difficulty.

The Waltz sections have their own harmonic and dynamic challenges but they do not diverge away from the interlocking focus of the composition. It is essential that performers give added focus to dynamics during these sections. The dynamics must express the feel and flow of the Waltz style.

## Ensemble considerations:

The ensemble should have at least two performers per part. This should provide enough balance to audibly distinguish between each steelpan part or voice. The composition uses only two specific styles or grooves. An African $\sigma / 8$ style and a western Waltz style. In performance these two styles should work or be performed as contradiction to each other. They should therefore answer and complement one another while establishing their own individual rhythmic patterns, tempi and dynamic levels.

The interlocking rhythms used in both styles have to be performed clearly and precisely in order to express the groove correctly. A slight change or alteration in the rhythm could change the groove that identifies each specific style. Similar to the other compositions, the changes between sections have to be executed with precision.

## Description of composition:

The piece is set in a panorama style and makes use of 9 voices, as in most panorama ensembles. The panorama competition was initiated in 1963 and since then has seen many innovations and changes in areas such as duration of pieces, ensemble layouts, formal features of the music and many other arranging techniques. At present, Panorama steelbands or steel orchestras have at least 100 players which include about 8 different parts or voices. The music is arranged from a short verse and chorus calypso composition into a ten minute masterpiece of solos, bridge passages, key changes, re-harmonizing, changes in style and rhythmic variations, all performed at about 120 foot beats per minute. The typical form of panorama pieces is through-composed, starting with a short introduction and leading into the main melody or original calypso melody, then followed by various other sections and ending with a dramatic coda. A brief recapitulation of the main melody may precede the coda.

The introduction of this piece starts with a rhythmic count to signal the start and give the tempo. Traditionally the count is performed by the band leader using a baton, the cowbell or the drummer. In this composition I use the Tenor part, which also sets the key note on D. The piece starts in D minor. A unison rhythm similar to a triplet figure starts the introduction with a flowing chromatic figure as a response. A build up follows using chromatic ascending, call-and-response phrases starting with the lowest instrument and then adding the higher parts, until a loud rhythmic punch concludes the introduction and leads into section A, the main melody.

The tune is played by the Tenor pans with the Double Tenor pans playing a backing harmony part based on the melody. The Double Second, Double Guitar and Triple Cello pans play backing harmonies using the common calypso rhythms associated with each instrument. The Four Cello plays counter-melodic parts to the main melody. An octave melody is played by the Quadrophonic pans on the Tenor melody. Later the Quadrophonics also play in unison to the Four Cello pans. The Bass pans play an on-beat bass pattern using the root and $5^{\text {th }}$ of each chord. This is a typical calypso bass pattern. Although many dynamic markings have been
written in to create expression in the piece, in practice most panorama steelbands have only one dynamic level, very loud.

At section B all the parts still perform the same function as in section A. This time the Four Cello and Quadrophonic counter-melody part emphasizes long sustained notes. This leads into a melodic solo section for these two instruments. The bass rhythm also changes to create a more salsa type groove. After the solos the music settles into a mellow groove which leads to a call-and-response section between the low and high parts. This starts the build up to the next section and a key change from D minor to A minor.

A chromatic phrase starts the Double Tenor and Double Second solo section at C. This is based on the first part of the main melody but in A minor. The Four Cello and Quadrophonic pans play the main melody during this section. The Tenor pans play long sustained notes as a form of counter-point. A soca style bass pattern replaces the calypso bass from the first melody at section A.

Section $D$, while still in A minor, is a rhythmic section that mainly focuses on the percussion section. The steelband play parts that resemble the rhythmic patterns one would hear while pan-makers are busy beating or pounding the oil drums into steelpan instruments with their hammers. The Tenor part mimics the tuning of a steelpan. The music eventually builds to a key change from A minor to C Major.

Section E is the Bass solo and is based on section B . The music is set in C Major in contrast to the original section B. During the second part of the solo the Four Cello and Quadrophonic pans join the bass part in playing a walking bass line. A build to a key change from C Major to E minor follows. Section F is a rhythmic call-and-response with a unison stop. This gives the drum kit or timbales the chance to perform an open rhythmic solo. Another build up changes the key from E minor to G minor.

During section $G$ the Tenor part is the focus of the music. They play fast chromatic phrases above a rhythmic unison backing from the rest of the band. Eventually the Tenor part is left to continue playing a solo chromatic line as a complete section solo (a cadenza). This flows
into a short pause and then leads to a brief recapitulation of the main melody at section H .
The music returns to the original $D$ minor key.

A rhythmic punch section leads into the coda section at section I. Here the music starts to build and create the intensity of the ending. The coda includes ascending chromatic and diatonic phrases with backing rhythmic punches to increase the volume of the ensemble before it concludes with a final rhythmic punch to signal the end.

## Technical considerations:

To realistically perform as a member of a steelband in a big composition like this, performers have to have a good experience and knowledge of playing skills and technical ability. For most of the backing harmonic instruments Grade 5 or 6 levels would be required. These would include Double Seconds, Double Guitars, Triple Cellos and the entire Bass section. Members of the percussion section should be at a similar equivalent level. However, a basic knowledge of playing techniques on various percussion instruments can see players form part of the percussion section.

For all melodic or soloing instruments, performers should be at Grade 7 or 8 levels. These would include Tenors, Double Tenors, Four Cellos and Quadrophonics. The Quadrophinic and Double Tenor steelpans are by far the most demanding instruments in the panorama ensemble, as they perform every part possible. Solo sections are included in compositions and arranged for voice parts at the discretion of the composer.

The challenges faced by performers include: the tempo of panorama compositions (around 120 to 130 foot beats per minutes) performed for the duration of about ten minutes; changes in tempo, style, rhythms, dynamics and melody; performing all music from memory; performing demanding melodic or rhythmic solo sections if composed by the composer; and accuracy of executing the part that are usually rhythmically demanding.

## Ensemble considerations:

An ensemble of 120 players can create a variety of sounds in terms of its volume, color, texture and rhythmic groove. Kim Johnson in the book "Renegades: The History of the Renegades Steel Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago" states: You don't know the full power and glory of the steelpan until you have heard one of the large 120 -player steelbands... The musical energy which they have worked for months to generate, creating complex tunes and learning them by ear. You have to feel their energy to know it.

It takes a panorama ensemble roughly a full month of rehearsal to complete a full composition. Rehearsals are usually about six hours per day, five days per week. The composition will include introduction, main melody, melodic and harmonic variations, solo sections, groove sections, key changes, style changes, a refrain and coda. These ensembles showcase the maximum level steelbands can perform at.

## Description of composition:

In an almost anti-climax to the previous movement, Movement 5 expresses the versatile ability of the steelpan as a solo instrument. The piece uses a through-composed form which is repeated with variation in rhythm and harmony. It uses the Double Second steelpan instrument and is set the key of F minor. The Double Second is the preferred instruments for most steelpan soloists. This is mainly because of its musical range ( $21 / 2$ octaves) and layout of notes on the pans (alternating chromatic notes on each drum).

Harmonically the main focus of the piece is on the F minor and F diminished arpeggios. Counter-point compositional techniques create the backing harmonic and counter-melodic parts. Melodic and counter-melodic phrases complement each other by using different musical register, rhythmic repetition, sequential movement and contrast in note-values. The piece is aimed at showing audiences the contrast of how subtle and vigorous steelpan solos can be.

## Technical considerations:

Because steelpan instruments lack the ability of playing a sustained note from a single stroke, the execution and performance of a solo steelpan composition is audibly very different from hearing a steelband ensemble perform. In order to create a sustained note, steelpan performers have to play a tremolo on the note. Tremolos vary from person to person and it is only the top players who can knowingly express the difference between tremolos through subtle rhythmic changes. In a large steelband ensemble it is impossible to hear these differences unless they are purposely included in the composition. The sustained note therefore sounds like the desired long, held note it is meant to be.

This provides a challenge for soloists who not only have to play the melody, but also backing harmony and bass parts. It has become the norm to compose or arrange steelpan solos in a counter-point style of writing. While one part plays a sustained note, the other part will play single notes. It is off-course possible for both the melody and the backing parts to rhythmically play together through single notes or sustained notes.

The main reason why only two parts can be performed at the same time is purely logical. Players only have two hands and therefore two sticks with which to interpret three or four voice parts. Most professional players can perform the melody, while playing a simple bass and harmonic backing part. Some players also perform with three or four sticks (two in each hand). This can be executed more easily on the single drum Tenor Pan than on the Double Second instrument.

Movement 5, 'Gentle Breeze', can be compared to a Grade 6 piece using the ABRSM or Trinity College Pitched Percussion syllabi. It showcases aspects of monophonic, homophonic and polyphonic phrases. The piece shows how versatile steelpan solo performers can be.

## Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)




Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)



Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)




Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)



Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)


Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)







Heavy Metal (Mvt.1)


Heavy Metal (Mvt.l)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)



Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)




Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)




Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)


Clv.

Gro.
$N$. BI.

こ. Dr.

$\ell$

Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)







Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)









Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)



Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)





Caribbean Essencc (Mvt.2)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt2)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)


Caribbean Essence (Mvt.2)


## African Minuet (Mvt.3)





African Minuet (Mvt.3)

African Minuet (Mvt.3)


African Minuet (Mvt.3)





African Minuet (Mvt.3)


## African Minuet (Mvt.3)



African Minuet (Mvt.3)



## African Minuet (Mvt.3)



African Minuet (Mvt.3)


> African Minuet (Mvt.3)






Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)


Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)






Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)












Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)


Battle of the Pans (Myt.4)








Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)












Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)










Battle of the Pans (Mvt.4)


$$
L \in I
$$












Gentle Breeze (Mvt.5)






