Cornell University Steel Band

Music 3613 (also LATA 3613)  
Fall 2012  
Tuesdays, 4:40-6:40pm, Bailey Hall  
Either 0 credits, S-U, or 1 credit, letter grade  
Prerequisite: successful audition

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http://percussion.music.cornell.edu

About the Cornell University Steel Band

The Cornell Steel Band performs music drawing on the musical traditions of Trinidad and Tobago, with attention paid to calypso and soca styles. We also perform music in other popular styles, compositions for the group, and arrangements of different pieces in different genres. Special attention is paid to the role of the steel band within Trinidadian history and culture, through readings and discussions.

Materials/ Resources

Reading (to be assigned throughout the semester):

Book and CD on reserve at Cornell Library

Other required texts and recordings will be available online through the course’s Blackboard site (https://blackboard.cornell.edu)

Projects

This semester, the CUSB will perform on a joint concert with the Cornell World Drum and Dance Ensemble and Nukporfe, Binghamton’s African Dance and Drum ensemble on Friday, November 16th at 6pm on at Willard Straight Hall. More information will be available as the semester progresses.

Performance is essential to musical learning. As such, the CUSB is actively seeking additional performance opportunities, and welcomes suggestions for venues or programs. Let’s get out there and play! Ensemble members will be expected to maintain a reasonable degree of scheduling flexibility in terms of potential performances.
Rehearsals

The CUSB rehearses Tuesdays from 4:40 to 6:40pm in Bailey Hall. Members are asked to be set up and ready to begin playing at the beginning of rehearsal—this means setting aside time BEFORE rehearsal to find, build, and set up pans in order to facilitate a 4:40 start time. Members are also expected to help one another pack up at the end of rehearsal. Ensemble members not set up by the beginning of rehearsal will be considered late.

Equipment for the Cornell Steel Band is kept in Bailey Hall B13, where it must be neatly stored at all times when not in use.

Members are expected to prepare their own parts on their own practice time—rehearsal is not time to be learning parts. Practice time in B13 is available via ID coding, as outlined in the Cornell percussion guidelines. Members are also expected to keep track of and to protect their parts and scores. Folders will be distributed at the first rehearsal, and stored with the pans in Bailey B13. Scores and parts will also be available through the course’s Blackboard site.

Although rehearsals will rely on our members’ reading skills throughout the semester, we will also learn repertoire and perform by memory, reflecting the methodology of steel bands in Trinidad. Audio files will be available on the percussion department website, but a personal audio recorder might be a smart tool to bring to rehearsals, in addition to a notebook and folder for class handouts.

Depending on our members’ availability, the CUSB may hold additional rehearsals on Saturdays before concerts and to accommodate other schedule changes.

Important Dates:
- October 23th: Master class with Josh Quillen, director of NYU Steel
- November 16th: Concert with World Drum and Dance Ensemble, Binghamton African Drum and Dance Ensemble
- November 20th: Class rescheduled for date TBA (possibly November 24?)
- December 4th: Class rescheduled for date TBA

Assignments and Grading

The CUSB’s work consists mainly of rehearsing together; therefore, attendance is of the highest importance. There are no free or unexcused absences. A student missing a class due to illness will need to bring a medical excuse form to the following rehearsal. Should an upcoming meeting, out-of-town excursion, or other unavoidable, once-in-a-lifetime activity impact class attendance, students should inform the instructor by the FRIDAY BEFORE the coming meeting. Classes missed without either contact
will result in the reduction of one letter grade. Students will fail the course with a third unexcused absence. Two late appearances to rehearsal will also result in the reduction of one letter grade.

**CUSB performances are the culmination of the ensemble’s work each semester. Students who miss the scheduled Fall performance will fail the course without documented proof of extraordinary circumstance.**

Band members will also complete a short written assignment related to some aspect of steel pan culture as it impacts the ensemble’s work. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any written work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.

**Grading**

In addition to written work, grading primarily reflects commitment to the work of the Cornell Steel Band. A committed musician is on time and prepared for rehearsals, enthusiastic about the music, committed to improvement, and intent on contributing to the group. Intermittent or inadequate preparation and attitude will result in low grades, as well as an unhappy ensemble.

All relevant rehearsal information, including schedules, audio, and video files will be posted to the percussion department website, under “Course materials:”
http://percussion.music.cornell.edu/materials.html

**Equipment**

Cornell will supply pans and some mallets. Members are encouraged to purchase their own mallets, through an online auction site like eBay or a retailer such as Panyard (http://www.panyard.com) or Kakesa (http://www.kakesa.com).

**Concert Dress**

Look good! Solid-color or multicolored top, solid pants or skirt. No jeans, sneakers, or hats.