



**The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited**  
**Launch of Music Score Booklets**  
**March 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 | Hotel Normandie**  
**Remarks by Mark Loquan | President, NGC**

Good evening.

Imagine it is mid-July, and a young boy is practising pan in his backyard. There is a big concert in a few weeks, his band will play. It is the band's third big show for the year, and tickets are already sold out. He imagines with excitement the thunderous applause when his band performs its chart-topping single - a pan collaboration with a leading vocalist, which has been blared from every radio for the past few weeks. He will have to take his pan in to the shop for tuning before the concert, but another pan store just opened in town, so he won't need to go far. Maybe he will buy some new scores when he's there and start learning a song for his assessment in the new school term. He knows the classics always impress.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this imagined scenario, I describe what the future of pan could look like. For pan to have that future, it must be able to stand on its own. It must be a generative industry that can exist without the need for corporate support. It must be able to maintain its own viability with positive feedback loops that stimulate continual growth. This is the definition of sustainability.

Sustainability is a cause to which I attach much value, as President of an energy company, and as a concerned citizen in a world of depletion. We hear talk in abundance about the depletion of our planet's natural resources, but what about the depletion of our cultural heritage? Borders are gone and we risk cultural erasure if we do not hold fast to those things which make us unique.

Pan is one of those things. The only instrument to have been invented in a century of invention - how great a distinction for a country of our size. Yet by our actions, or inaction, we are leaving the fate of this indigenous instrument to chance, risking its loss to the passage of time. We

cannot allow ourselves to forget its beginnings, the music its pioneers played, or the crafts of manufacture and tuning. Importantly, beyond actively remembering the past, we must actively create the future.

In that future, perhaps we can see a Trinidad and Tobago where pan lives beyond Panorama. Where bands play and audiences listen throughout the year, in concert halls and radio playlists, locally, regionally and internationally. Perhaps Trinidad and Tobago can be a place where young people not only command the instrument, but where innovation is encouraged and patented. A place where our music is preserved and its icons held in high esteem. A place where new music is constantly being composed, recorded and fully utilised in our educational institutions for sustainability and longevity.

Perhaps T&T can be a place of master pan makers, master pan tuners, accessible and in healthy supply, running competitive businesses which compel innovation in the craft. In that place, schools teach pan, but students can learn independently, because they are literate in music and pan scores are readily available.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am heartened that we already see the landscape being transformed as many young, enthusiastic children are performing and learning music. Bands are thinking future, with one of our own even having a feeder programme from schools to stage sides which will ensure continuous development of talent and deeper involvement of the community. But there is still work to be done.

For pan to be sustainable, we must invest in those elements that will allow the industry to **grow** and **maintain** itself. There must be an appetite and appreciation for pan music that goes beyond events. Panyards must be viewed as positive spaces ripe with possibility for youth and community development. There must be bands and pannists who can produce quality music; constant innovation to sustain interest and attract new customers; artisans who can make, repair and tune the instruments; education and training to constantly replenish the pool of players and craftsmen.

I am proud to say that NGC has been investing in these areas. We started two decades ago by supporting unsponsored steelbands across the country, and later evolved structured

partnerships with four bands in our fenceline communities - NGC Couva Joylanders, NGC La Brea Nightingales, NGC Steel Xplosion from Tobago and the Gonzales Sheikers.

A few years ago, we moved past infusions of capital and started building the sustainability of our bands. We have funded workshops to build the operational and administrative capabilities of each orchestra's executive, so that our bands can function as successful businesses.

We partnered with the MIC Institute of Technology in 2018 to deliver a customised pan manufacturing programme to members of our bands. Participants are learning to sink, groove and tune pans, as well as basic welding and machine shop skills so they can build pan stands, repair broken instruments, or customise tools. They are further being trained in sound engineering, music technology and computer applications used in the industry.

NGC has also funded music literacy programmes for our bands. The ability to read sheet music can enhance player performance and allow a band to expand its repertoire of music. A literate ensemble can teach itself, and in due course compose and arrange for pan, increasing the volume of original music they are able to produce and preserve. Development of this skillset can in turn create niche markets for scorers, transcribers, composers and arrangers who could generate income from material they produce.

We have now made yet another investment in the sustainability of this industry.

In 2019, we approached The University of the West Indies to record and transcribe music performed by our bands over two Panorama seasons. Over the course of a few weeks, a team of postgraduate students visited the panyards and captured their songs. Using the music notation system SIBELIUS, these recordings were converted into music files, which were edited for three proficiency levels – Primary School, Secondary School and Masters. The resulting scores were then compiled into digital publications. It is noteworthy that in the course of this exercise, students gained experience in how to score music, which builds capacity in a field that may well rise to prominence if our campaign to grow pan is successful.

Several other benefits can be derived from this project, all centred on sustainability. Having music scores customised for steelpan makes instruction possible outside the panyard, accessible for education and to a wider public. Anyone who can read sheet music could

potentially learn to play, even independently, and this could encourage more musicians to take up the instrument, adding to the pool of players.

On top of these important outcomes, scored music targets sustainability on another level. Many pannists learn to play music by ear, relying on oral instruction from their leaders. This is good and should continue to be part of our culture and development. However we have seen that we risk losing pan compositions as tutors age or pass away unless there is a deliberate path to preservation for posterity. How can the industry build without a foundation? Scored music is therefore just as much historical record as it is instructional material.

Ladies and gentlemen, for so many reasons, I am thrilled to see this project realised today. Not only have we documented music from our bands for posterity, but we are now making them freely available for pannists anywhere in the world to access, via NGC's website. We are also directly sharing with schools, so the resource can be brought immediately into classrooms. As I see it, this brings the industry steps closer to standing on its own.

I wish to thank our partners at The UWI for their professionalism and support in the delivery of this project. You continue to drive innovation in our local pan industry with your research attention in important areas of study. I also express gratitude to our sponsored bands, whose talent and hard work have given this project a purpose.

At this juncture, allow me to publicly congratulate our hometown band NGC Couva Joylanders on being adjudged Panorama champions in the Medium Band Category this year. We are unspeakably proud of your achievement.

Friends, I have a dream. As clear in my mind as it is dear to my heart. I see pan taking wing and soaring to great heights. With the realisation of this project, I am more convinced than ever that that dream is within reach.

I thank you.

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