



Office of Research, Impact and Postgraduate Studies

presents a **Postgraduate Seminar** titled

Measuring Perceptions of Steelpan Music

by **Mr Aaron Ameerali**

This study investigates audience perceptions and preferences regarding the sound of the steelpan, a musical instrument originating from Trinidad and Tobago. Renowned for its rich cultural significance and distinctive tonal qualities, the steelpan faces challenges in sustaining its status as the national instrument amidst globalisation and shifting listener preferences. A key issue lies in the standardisation of drum manufacture to ensure consistent tonal quality. As a precursor to addressing this, the study examines preferred steelpan sounds, laying the groundwork for establishing standards in drum production that align with audience expectations and cultural heritage. The research seeks to answer how perceptions of steelpan sound vary and identify factors such as listener demographics, musical background, and cultural appreciation that influence audience preferences.

The literature for this research explores studies on music perception, cultural and emotional responses to music, and the socio-cultural significance of steelpan music, with a focus on frameworks in music cognition, aesthetics, and ethnomusicology. It examines the historical and cultural evolution of the steelpan, its role in Trinidad and Tobago's cultural identity, and its global reception, while analysing empirical studies on audience engagement and the impact of musical elements like rhythm, timbre, and harmony. Using an empiricist approach within a mixed-methods framework, the research integrates quantitative tools, such as surveys, and qualitative methods like interviews and focus groups to measure perceptions of steelpan music. Experimental studies further provide insights into physiological and behavioural responses, ensuring a holistic understanding of how steelpan music influences diverse audiences.

This work is significant as it addresses an essential aspect of preserving and advancing the cultural heritage of the steelpan. By understanding audience preferences and perceptions, the study contributes to the development of manufacturing standards that align with cultural expectations, ensuring the steelpan's continued relevance and resonance in both local and global contexts.



Mr AARON AMEERALI joined The University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT) in 2005 and is currently a Senior Instructor in the Mechanical Engineering, Manufacturing & Entrepreneurship Unit.

Aaron earned his Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Mechanical Engineering and his Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) in Mechanical Engineering from the University of the West Indies, and furthered his studies by gaining Certificates in Tertiary Level (University) Teaching and The Theology of the Body. Aaron is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) at UTT in the area of '*Measuring Perceptions of Steelpan Music.*'

He lectures undergraduate courses including *Introduction to Engineering, Materials & Manufacturing Processes, Engineering Systems Dynamics, Strength of Engineering Materials, and Ergonomics*. He also supervises industry projects and the International Study Tour at the Postgraduate level while conducting outreach activities for the MME Unit. Over the years Aaron's teaching philosophy has been refined to one that includes understanding and application of the subject matter rather than regurgitation of learnt principles.

To this end Aaron has published ten journal papers and presented twenty-five conference papers at both the regional and international levels. Aaron has given of his time in the service of the University, the engineering profession and teaching of the faith. In 2024, for his dedication to his craft, Aaron was awarded UTT's Institutional Award for Excellence in Teaching.

His other research interests include innovative manufacturing technologies and cognitive processes involved in music perception.

Wednesday 29th January, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

zoom | **CLICK HERE** to register