



Director of the Fonclaire Enterprises Ltd and manager of the Fonclaire Steel Orchestra Darren Sheppard

Fonclaire celebrates 55th year with gala concert

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In partnership with the National Lotteries Control Board (NLCB), Fonclaire Steel Orchestra, located at 8 Dottin Street, San Fernando, recently embarked upon transforming its organisational structure and infrastructure, affording its stage side performance space to be fully refurbished and commercialised.

A gift shop and NLCB Lotto Centre, falling under the umbrella of its limited liability company, Fonclaire Enterprises Ltd, is among the business ventures including car wash services, a recreational facility and agri-business to be rolled out soon, says director, Darren Sheppard.

"COVID-19 provided us with a unique opportunity to address some of the shortcomings identified within the organisation, so the pandemic turned out to be a blessing in disguise for us," he said.

"The reality with Fonclaire now is, given our restructuring, Fonclaire is governed by a board of directors comprising foundation members and a management team. Fonclaire Enterprises Ltd is a solely-owned subsidiary of Fonclaire Steel Orchestra (FSO), charged with the responsibility of transacting business on behalf of Fonclaire with a view to generating revenue."

The 55-year-old steel orchestra is planning to celebrate its anniversary with a gala concert on April 25 at the Naparima Bowl at 6 pm.

A cast of local and international artistes, including former players who have been elevated to arrangers and tutors, the junior steel orchestra, Fonclaire Golden Steel which comprises pannists that that benefited from the band's seniors' classes, the Darren Sheppard Project Jazz Ensemble and host Fonclaire, are scheduled to perform.

Apart from specially invited guests such as local jazz queen, Vagnette Big-

ford and the "Sweet Soca Man" Baron, other special guests will not be revealed until very close to the show or the night of the show, Sheppard said.

An element of the evening will be an awards ceremony honouring foundation members who are alive, including Rudin Austin, Kenneth "Shark Head" Lalla, Hatim Lalla, Arnold Cooper and Michael Salvador.

Sheppard explained, "Pre-COVID... Fonclaire would have embarked upon a stringent school music programme, being given the honour of maintaining over 90 players embracing five schools—Pleasantville Secondary, Coffee Boys, Anstey Girls' Anglican, San Fernando Girls' Primary and St Gabriel Girls' Catholic—while carded to have come on board were, St John's Anglican, Mon Repos RC and San Fernando East Secondary.

"This strategy was aimed at sourcing The Fonclaire Generation Next while giving back to the young people by exposing them to the national musical instrument, pan."

Sheppard said he and the organisation are proud to announce that their band is fully integrated into all aspects of the community and they intend to the band Fonclaire the economic engine that drives the community with business ventures and other activities involving employing members of the community.

Fonclaire is best known for its 1990 Panorama classic, Pan by Storm, but also prides itself in being one of the cultural gems of San Fernando with its sterling diverse repertoire, resilience, forward-thinking, respect for the elderly, and commitment to human and community development.

Business hours for Fonclaire Enterprises Ltd are Mondays to Saturdays from 9 am to 9 pm and its directors are Rudin Austin, Hatim Lalla, Kenneth Arthur, Wendell Lai Ting, Joseph Reid and Darren Sheppard.

Tickets for the gala concert are priced at \$250. For further information call (868) 610-8852 or follow Fonclaire's social media pages.