



Ken Professor Philmore

BIOGRAPHY



HIS BIOGRAPHY



KEN 'PROFESSOR' PHILMORE

A quotation from an interview with Ken 'Professor' Philmore. "I believe the children are our future, Teach them well and let them lead the way, Show them all the beauty they possess inside, Give them a sense of pride..."

A light that burned so brightly, lighting the way for others to follow... Ken 'Professor' Philmore's life can best be described through the enduring lyrics of the hit song, 'The Greatest Love of All'.

Ken's love of the national instrument-the steel pan, his passion, heart and musical genius ultimately was the basis for his vision of creating a legacy of excellence. His drive to show the versatility of the musical range of the pan instrument, to teach and develop the youth as well as work with fellow musicians all over the world was relentless to ensure that the coming generations would continue to take Trinidad & Tobago's national instrument, the steel pan, to the world.

Ken's life and character was grounded by his strong family upbringing and faith in God, his selfless love for his wife Sophia, his children, Keston, Kendra, Kenedi, siblings Antoinette, Gail, Brian, extended family and numerous friends and supporters. To know Ken 'Professor' Philmore was to experience an emotional bond.

His generosity knew no bounds and it is that generosity that he brought through his music to our country and to the world through our national instrument. As one of the pioneers of pan, Ken achieved his dream of taking steel pan to the world to demonstrate that steel pan is a percussion musical instrument which can play any genre of music.

Ken's romance with the steel pan began when, at the age nine (9), he received the gift of a tenor pan from his cousins, Barry and Ferdinand Brathwaite. After picking the notes and teaching himself to play music over years of persistence, the late Steve Achaiba, former Captain of Hatters, asked Ken's father, the late Cyril Philmore, to allow him to come to the pan yard. There was great resistance from Ken's father, who did not want his son to be a panman. He sent him for guitar lessons, but Ken kept running away to go to the panyard. Ken's father finally recognized Ken's talent and began taking him to Hatters pan yard in 1974 when he was fourteen years old.



Steve Achaiba recognized that Ken was gifted with perfect pitch and eventually made Ken a Section Leader of Tenors where Ken drilled the tenor pan players to play music to play and rehearse new lines. Many seniors at Hatters pan yard often wondered who the boy with the big round glasses was, and they said he looked like a 'professor'. They began calling Ken "Professor" and many of his friends also called him 'Pro' which is the Trinidadian short-form for 'Professor' and not 'Prof' as many believe. In 1975, Hatters won the National Panorama playing 'A Tribute to Spree Simon', when Ken was a fifteen (15) year old tenor player, and it was from that time Ken's career in pan music took off.

Ken practiced, and practiced to develop his solo pan skills, as well as and his God given talent of perfect pitch. Ken's career as a pan soloist emerged when Calypsonian Squibby invited him to perform with him at the Kitchener tent. Based upon Ken's exciting performance at the tent, Aldwyn Roberts aka 'Lord Kitchener' was impressed with Ken's performance and invited Ken to play with him at the tent every Carnival. Kitchener arranged suits for himself and Ken so that they can be dressed alike and would call Ken's dear departed mother to tell her which outfit to prepare for their performance. Ken was happy and honoured to be able to perform and record many Kitchener signature pan songs with the great Lord Kitchener. They became a star team bringing exciting performances locally and internationally. This partnership with the deceased legendary Lord Kitchener launched Ken's career as a pan soloist with unique speed, skill and dexterity. Ken's left hand tenor pan was specially designed and created by our famous and talented tuner Mr. Birch Kellman.

His talent as a pan soloist and arranger was so impressive that by 1985 he became musical director/arranger for one of the nation's prestigious steel orchestra, Fonclaire. Ken began arranging Kitchener pan tunes for Fonclaire and then experimented with jazz, funk, reggae and other types of music.

Pan by Storm Solo – LINK: <https://youtu.be/Cmq-jyAcNEs>

Locally, Ralph Mc Donald, Alvin Daniel, Mark Loquan, Dr. Len Boogsie Sharpe, Dr. Pelham Goddard, Ronnie McIntosh, Carl "Beaver" Henderson, Destra Garcia, Anthony Prescott 'Designer' (Vocalist of Pan By Storm) and the late Dr. Pat Bishop, the late Clive Zanda, the late Lord Kitchener, and the late Dexter 'Blaxx' Stewart represent only a segment of the persons with whom Ken collaborated either as a performer, composer or arranger.

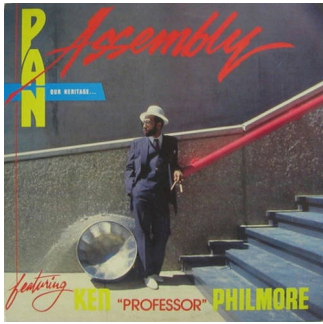


Ken was also honoured to play at the President's house at the inauguration of President Carmona who is originally from South Trinidad. Ken's performance was so well received that he was invited to perform at many official functions at the President's house. In 1985, Ken was also invited to perform for Queen Elizabeth II on her royal visit to Trinidad and Tobago.

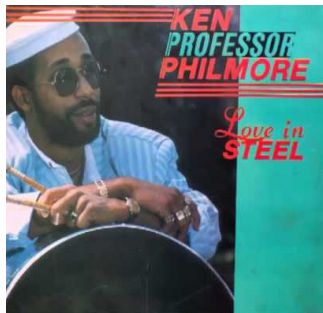
Ken's vision of creating a platform for young people to take our national instrument to the world with distinction is well documented as he was a recognized teacher at Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive. He taught well known artistes such as Prof. Liam Teague and Darren Sheppard, Wentworth Richardson and many more, who have become Trinidad and Tobago's Steelband Ambassadors performing all over the world. He also trained and took Pleasantville Senior Comprehensive to several school pan competitions. Interestingly, although Ken was a self-taught musical prodigy, he never took advantage of studying music formally. He thanked God at every opportunity for his gift of perfect pitch and musical blessings.

Several steel bands have been the beneficiaries of Ken 'Professor' Philmore's musical genius. Ken arranged for several steel bands from the east, west, north, south of Trinidad and even Tobago. Some of these bands include- Fonclaire, Skiffle Bunch, Hatters, Kalamo Kings, Invaders, Casablanca, Power Stars, Potential Symphony, Sangre Grande Cordettes, Pamberi, Courts Laventille Sound Specialists, Gay Hoytonians, Solo Harmonities, Metro Stars, T&TEC New East Side Dimension, Invaders, Our Boys and many more. Every year Ken arranged and qualified for Panorama finals in one or more than one category of the competition. Fonclaire played several of Ken's compositions for Panorama and was very competitive at the National Panorama finals achieving a hat trick of second place positions for three consecutive years (1989, 1990 and 1991). Fonclaire was also South Zone Panorama champions for four years under the musical baton of 'Professor'.

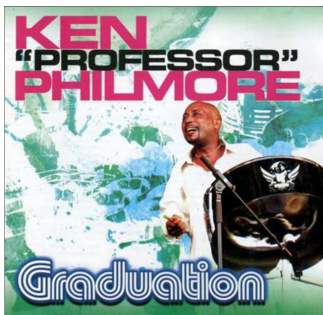
His crowning glory at Panorama finals (large bands), came in 1990 at the Savannah, when he took the world by storm with his own composition, Pan by Storm. The lyrics were penned by Andrea Phillip and Anthony Prescott (Designer) vocalized. Ken's arrangement of Pan by Storm by Fonclaire was indeed magical and sensational to become a signature arrangement with everybody saying "Fonclaire win". However to everyone's great surprise Fonclaire was placed second in the Panorama large bands competition by half (.5) of a point. To the shock and dismay of supporters locally and internationally, to this day, many still discuss, debate, and lament that decision. Fonclaire is the only band in history to lose a Panorama competition by half of a point (.5).



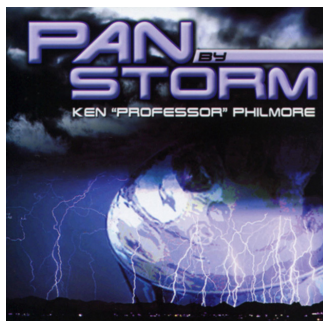
Ken persevered and his skill as an arranger was sought after by many bands. Courts Laventille Sound Specialist entered the Medium band category of the Panorama competition and won that category or achieved many top placements with the winning compositions of Mark Loquan and Ken 'Professor' Philmore. Ken "Professor" Philmore is one of the most talented pannists, composer, arranger who had emerged from the South of Trinidad, and most bands believed that Professor's arrangement would at least qualify them for the Panorama finals. They were not disappointed.



Dr. Ray Holman was the first pan arranger to create his own composition of 'Pan on the Move' for pan and following his winning Panorama performance with Starlift in 1972, then came Dr. Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe who composed his own pan tunes which won Panoramas on multiple occasions. Ken 'Professor' Philmore and many other pan arrangers started to compose pan music not just for Panorama, but for other pan competitions. It is well known that Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe's composition and arrangement of 'Fire Down Below' by Phase 11 and Fonclaire's arrangement of the same tune by Professor was tied for second place at Panorama finals. After that exciting finish 'Boogsie' told Ken that he did not mind him playing his music but that it was time he started making his own. Ken took up the challenge and from the following year started to compose many pan songs such as Jump, Pan Ecstasy, and so on for Panorama.



In 1985, Ken produced his first album – Our Heritage, which featured a mixture of jazz classics such as Mr. Magic, Stardust together with pan instrumentals of popular calypsos in that same year.



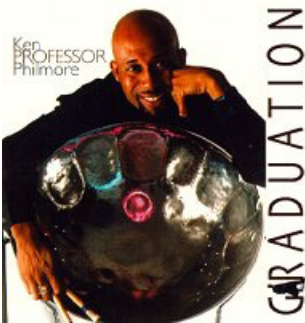
Ken's drive and love for the instrument produced eleven (12) Pan Albums/ CD's from 1985 featuring his own compositions since 1987 are as follows:



- Pan Calypso (1987)
- Love in Steel (1988)
- Pan Jamboree (1989)
- Pan By Storm (1990)
- Pan Ecstasy (1991)
- Pan in the Party (1992)
- All Night (1993)
- Graduation (1997)
- Cruizin' (2014)
- Perfect Combination (2014)



Ken also produced “Professor Sings”, a CD which includes – Carnival is We, Rapso Time, Pan By Storm, Calypso, Jump Up In The Road. Ken evolved to become the singing pan man and actually sang Rapso Time, Jump up in the Road and others.



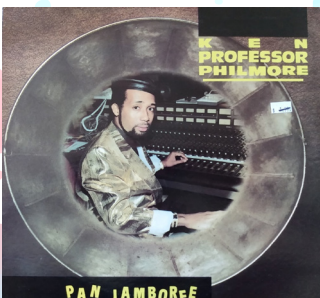
His music was also featured on several of the Pan Assembly (collection). Ken also composed his own blend of jazz music releasing CDs such as: Sifting through the Notes, Philmore’s Dream, Rhythm in the Groove, CruizIn, Love in Steel, Graduation, Perfect Combination (featuring Jerome Bissessar) and his signature composition for Fonclaire, Pan By Storm. Composer of Panorama pieces Mark Loquan worked along with Ken to produce eleven (11) songs which Ken arranged for bands locally and internationally. From this collaboration, Ken arranged Panorama pieces for Courts Laventille Sound Specialist which was very successful in the Medium band category. Laventille Sound Specialist won Panorama in 2008 with Hooked following a win with Johnnie, and often placed in the top three of Panorama finals almost every year with a Professor arrangement.



Ken’s impact was so great that he was celebrated by Pan Trinidad as one of the most promising pan arrangers of the 1980’s. During Ken’s career as a Solo Pannist, Pan Arranger and Composer, he was honoured with many awards locally and internationally.



Inspired by some friends, Ken produced two concerts in the 1990’s - A Man and his Music and Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore in Concert. They were well attended by his fans from both north and south at Roxy in St. James and at the Naparima Bowl in San Fernando. These concerts were frequently aired on Channel 4 which is no longer in operation.



Since his promotion to Heaven on September 30, 2018, His Worship Junia Regrello, the Mayor of the City of San Fernando, held a week of activities from February 18 -24, 2019 titled, Cultural Icons Week during which the late Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore received the following recognition/tributes:

- A short street in Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore’s name was unveiled at the top of High Street, San Fernando

See Link: <https://youtu.be/WqxHJv1RQBg>



- An Exhibition was held from February 18-24, 2019 at the City Hall Auditorium on Harris Promenade displaying all Ken's trophies, awards, photo gallery of local and international performances, gazette gallery. Additionally, famous testimonies from abroad and significant interviews recorded with Ken were on display at the Exhibition.
- A tour was arranged for children from various schools to visit the exhibition where about 270 children toured the exhibit of Ken's collection of awards and achievements.
- A Calypso competition was held for persons paying tribute in song to the 'Professor'. Eleven (11) contestants registered and it was a qualified success. This calypso tribute to 'Pro' on Sunday February 24th 2019 was won by Brian Lyndon, Shelly Dass 2nd, and Cindy Chatban 3rd.

Ken 'Professor' Philmore was a leader, and one of the pioneers and forerunners of pan being accepted as a musical instrument at Universities all over the world.

Ken loved playing the tenor pan, and it was his constant companion. His persistence and drive led him to become an ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago's steel pan music and culture to students at Universities, and to musicians locally and internationally. Many musicians, including the beloved late Dr. Ellie Mannette who promoted pan lectures to international students ensured that Ken's talents as a musician and pan arranger were not hidden.

From 1987 to 1997 Ken lectured at universities locally and abroad as follows:

See <http://www.seetobago.org/trinidad/pan/panpeep/pp26.htm>

- The Kennedy Centre, Washington, DC
- Yale University
- Harvard University
- New York Tech Community College
- University of West Virginia
- Howard University
- Michigan University
- Virginia University as well as the
- Catonsville High School and Old Mill High School, both in Maryland, USA.



In as much as Ken brought the music of our national instrument to the Queen's Park Savannah, he also brought it to Nigeria, Japan, Canada, the Caribbean, London – arranging for the Metronomes, the USA (Broadway, BET and the Apollo Theatre) to name a few well known stages. He graced well known shows such as Good Morning America to promote and display music on the pan. Ken played with international, regional and local artistes such as Tito Puente - Latin American Musician, Jazz singer Nancy Wilson, Tina Turner, Phyllis Hyman, Little Richard, Bob James, Arturo Tappin, Ralph Mc Donald, Tina Turner and Lionel Hampton (NY), Andy Narell, the late Ella Fitzgerald, Lou Rawls, and the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

Ken's encounter with the late Mercer Ellington would give him the opportunity to sign a five (5) year contract with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, but because of the love of his country, Trinidad and Tobago, Ken declined signing what would have been a lucrative contract, as it would have prevented him from returning to Trinidad, the 'Mecca of Pan' for the annual Panorama season. For Ken 'Professor' Philmore his love passion and selfless commitment to Trinidad & Tobago came before personal gain. His music on pan to accompany the orchestra can be heard on the Duke Ellington Orchestra's recording of the song "Queenie Pie Reggae" on their album "Music is My Mistress".

Ken 'Professor' Philmore has also performed at places such as Carnegie Hall in New York, The Royal Albert Hall in London and the Apollo Theatre in Harlem. During Ken's career, he performed at several Jazz Festivals in Washington DC, Jazz Central on BET, Atlanta, St. Croix Jazz Festival, Barbados, Guyana, Tobago, St. Lucia, Joy of Jazz Johannesburg, Boston Symphony Hall and many others. His passion for his art was an expression of what was in his soul. It shone in every movement of his performance; you heard it in every note. Ken 'Professor' Philmore had a love affair with the steel pan that made him the consummate player and servant leader. Not only did he bring Trinidad and Tobago's pan music to the world, he showed the world that any genre of music could be played on our national instrument. He was a true Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago.

The PVC and Campus Principal of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Professor Brian Copeland describes Ken as The first 'Professor' of Pan when he paid tribute at Ken's funeral service on October 5, 2018. He continued 'Ken was not just a remarkable proponent of the art of pan, but a really energetic kind-spirited individual as well'. He was a shining example to young aspiring pannists everywhere. The world has lost another steel pan great, this one going all too soon.' Professor Copeland said that he met Ken in



Los Angeles, California while reading for his PHD and requested that Ken play 'Stardust' his personal top ten favourite at the time. Fast forward, fifteen years later, Professor Copeland said that he was proud to invite Ken to 'collaborate with us' at the Steelpan Laboratory at the University of the West Indies in the early days of the development of the Percussive Harmonic Instrument (PHI). He said Ken was the first professional to carry a test unit home. He continued to say that the quality of the tones were not up to Ken 'Professor' Philmore's standards, and Ken told him, 'Dr. Copeland, I am a professional, I cannot use this box on stage'. The experiment continued and Ken sampled the G-Pan tones and also made some contribution to its development. Professor Copeland continued : 'Pro' leaves behind a tremendous legacy of dynamic stage performances and a deep unshakeable love of and commitment to pan and music. As we say in local parlance, when it comes to pan soloist he cut track for 'gouti to run'.

Former President Carmona of Trinidad and Tobago, His Worship Mayor of San Fernando Junia Regrello, Musical Composer and Friend Mark Loquan, President of Pan Trinbago Keith Diaz, Officant and friend Rev. I. K. Williams also paid sterling tributes in celebration of Ken Professor Philmore's life on October 5, 2018. (YouTube)

Tributes to Ken 'Professor' Philmore (When Steel Talks)

November 24th 2018

an in the Ville (featuring 5 Steelbands) – In Tribute to Ken, our 'Sangabrange Dadda'

2019

One year after Ken's passing, the top pannist of T&T Duvone Stewart of Renegades, Clive Telemaque of All Stars, Dr. Len 'Boogsie' Sharpe of Phase II, representatives of Desperadoes, Fonclaire – Ken's son Keston and many more gathered at Carl Jacob's place, Kaiso Blues Café to celebrate and honour their friend and music colleague 'Pro'. This signature event was successfully organized by reporter Sheila Rampersad at short notice.

On September 30th 2019, Ken Philmore's composition of 'Pan by Storm' was reproduced and released as 'Pan By Storm...The Storm Continues' by his dear friend Sherwin Thwaites and friends on Apple Music.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zf59d2N8Ffk>



November 2nd 2019

Pan in the Ville (featuring 4 Steelbands) – ‘Forever Pro’

September 24th 2020

In celebration of Ken’s Anniversary – Pan Chronicles on line with Pannist/Arranger Duvone Stewart (local and International musicians)

October 2nd 2020

In honour of Ken’s contribution to the Pleasantville Community in San Fernando where he grew up, the residents of Pleasantville, San Fernando signed a petition to rename Poinsetta Lane (next to Ken’s family home) to ‘Ken Philmore Lane’. This ceremony was conducted during Cultural Icons Week on October 02, 2020 by His Worship, Mayor Junia Regrello. In attendance was the Parliamentary representative the Honourable Minister Brian Manning, President of Pan Trinidad, Mrs. Beverly Ramsey Moore, Composer and Musician Mark Loquan, Professor Brian Copeland, family and friends who came together to honour Ken’s musical legacy.

In honour of Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore dedication to the promotion of Trinidad and Tobago’s national instrument around the world, Ken was nominated to the National Awards Committee of Trinidad and Tobago on two occasions in 2019 and in 2020. On March 7th, 2022, Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore was awarded (Posthumously) in the sphere of Steelband Music and Culture; The Chaconia Medal ‘Silver’ National Award for the year 2020.

“Because the greatest Love of all is happening to me, I found the greatest Love of all inside of me” – Within himself,

Ken fulfilled his love for God,

Ken fulfilled his love for the National Instrument, the steel pan,

Ken fulfilled his love for his family and friends,

Ken fulfilled his love for teaching and developing the youth,

Ken fulfilled the love and passion of taking pan all over the world,

Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore loved his country of birth Trinidad and Tobago, and ultimately happily achieved and fulfilled, his true Purpose in life. May our dear brother, friend, musician continue to soar like an eagle and play music with the angels in heavenly places.

‘HEART OF LOVE’”

The legacy of the late Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore has been formalized with the official registration of the Ken ‘Professor’ Philmore Foundation, (Facebook).