



# Virginia Arts Festival

## Rhythm Report



**Greetings Rhythm Project Supporters—**

This school year has proven to be one of the most memorable years for our students and instructors as we've taken the All-Stars to perform and learn in the spotlight of new audiences. Although this spring has brought uncertainty and a pause to our ensembles, we are delighted to be able to look back at this school year and know that these students have already experienced more than any All-Stars ensemble before them. This special group of students had the honor to join Two other steel bands on stage at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, commonly known as PASIC, this past November in Indianapolis. We're proud of the preparation they put into this performance as it also helped prepare them for their next challenging adventure. This past February our All-Stars, instructors, and parents traveled to Trinidad for 12 days! Our students worked alongside a partner band of 120 players that allowed us to interact, observe, and even play alongside them! The Rhythm Project is proud to be an organization that provides unique experiences like these for our students, and we are thankful every day to have the ability to dream big and push for all of the students in our programs to do the same! As we take a pause from rehearsing and capping-off what would be the end of the school year, we want to reflect on the impact that this years travels have had on our students. We look forward to seeing all of them again very soon!

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For more information and a schedule of performances please visit

**[www.rhythmproject.org](http://www.rhythmproject.org)**

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**All-Stars, Parents, and Instructors at our host panyard,  
The Supernovas Steel Orchestra**

## All-Stars Go Abroad!

“Fun-filled. Memorable. Energetic. Life changing.”

These are just a few of the words used by the students of the Rhythm Project All-Stars describing their experience in the beautiful twin islands of Trinidad & Tobago where they took part in the world's largest steelband competition: National Panorama Finals.

On February 14th, 2020, the Rhythm Project All-Stars embarked on a trip to the birthplace of the steelpan. This fully-funded trip allowed the students, many whom had never been out of the United States before, to immerse themselves in a diverse way of life, culture, and cuisine.

From the moment the All-Stars landed in Trinidad, the chatter of the heat, the right-hand drive and the winding roads filled the maxi (also known as a bus) transporting the students. By the third day, the students embraced the heat and the extremely busy schedule with grace and optimism. A typical day on this trip involved local breakfast at the hotel, followed by daily excursions varying between numerous beach trips, zoo visits, ‘pan yard’ tours, and educational presentations by famous steel pan tuner - Juma Simmons, and foremost steel pan historian - Dr. Kim Johnson.

The day always came to an end with a long drive to the mountains of East Trinidad where the First Citizens Supernovas Steel Orchestra - a one hundred and twenty member steelband, rehearsed from 7:00pm - 2:00am. All twenty-one students of the Rhythm Project All-Stars had the opportunity to rehearse with and work alongside members of Supernovas and world-renowned arranger - Amrit Samaroo.

### Carnival Monday “Jouvert” Celebration (pictured below)

***“Performing in Panorama alongside my friends was truly a dream come true.”***

**-Savannah Barsoom**

**All-Stars Senior, Virginia Beach**

***“Having the opportunity to travel abroad and experience the home of the steel pan is something I never thought I would get to experience before graduating High School.”***

**-Curtis Patton**

**All-Stars Junior, Virginia Beach**





Trinidad & Tobago National Panorama is an annual steelband competition that occurs during Carnival time on the grand stage of the Queens Park Savannah. This highly competitive event showcases the musical excellence and execution of steelbands around the country within three categories, small, medium, and large. The Rhythm Project All-Stars were able to have 11 members, including 8 students and 3 directors, be selected to perform for the final competition on Saturday February 22nd, 2020. To have the students and directors share the stage and perform alongside one another was a memorable and exciting experience for all involved.

The dynamic and exuberant performance by the Supernovas not only impacted the students getting to perform, but also moved the bodies and spirits of every spectator in the audience.



**Students listen to a historical lecture about *Skiffle*, a band from San Fernando, Trinidad (pictured below)**



Students, chaperones, and directors alike all experienced the unique bond that the preparation for this competition instilled. A majority of our students were able to foster friendships with Trinidadians that they will cherish forever. We are forever grateful for the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in this monumental trip. We send thanks to all drivers, security, guides, hosts, and all that assisted in assuring a safe and fun trip for all of our students and chaperones. An undeniably unforgettable experience and a huge accomplishment for the Rhythm Project and by extension the Virginia Arts Festival, this trip will be etched in the hearts and minds of our students and parents as a once in a lifetime opportunity that encouraged hard work, creativity, motivation, humility, and discipline.

***“My favorite part about the trip was getting to make friends with members of the Supernovas. They were so welcoming to us and many of them I still talk to today.”***

**-Torrance Massenburg  
All-Stars Senior, Portsmouth**

***“Traveling to Trinidad was an incredible and fun experience that gives you a perspective outside of American culture.***

**-Cole Erb  
All-Stars Sophomore, Virginia Beach**

# Practicing Continues at Home

As we all adjust to our new normal of staying home and staying safe, our All-Stars have taken the opportunity to brush up on their music by practicing at home. This is a great time for our students to work on their own while also learning to be responsible for their instrument. This is just one of the many ways that we work to prepare the All-Stars for when they graduate and either purchase their own pan, or join a steel band at a university. Below are some action shots of our All-Stars hard at work!

Savannah Barsoom, Senior



Cahmauri Manigo, Junior



Josh Osborne, Senior



Brody Ryan, Sophomore



Khari Gilliam, Freshman

## Sponsors

The *Rhythm Project* is supported in part by ADS, Inc. American Borate Company, Bank of America, Capital Group Companies, Clark Nexsen, The Dalis Foundation, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, Leah S. Wohl Musical Arts Fund of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation, Old Dominion University Hixon Community Engagement Fund, Nordstrom, PRA Group, Queen of Virginia Charitable Giving, Ruth Brown Memorial Foundation, USAA, Wells Fargo, and the following cities and/or their Arts and Humanities Commissions: Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach.

Keep current with everything we have going on online! You can "Like" us on Facebook at *The Rhythm Project*. Be sure to also follow *Virginia Arts Festival* on Facebook and Instagram to stay up to date with us!



## The Rhythm Project

The Rhythm Project is a world percussion ensemble dedicated to the nurturing of self-esteem through individual and cooperative achievement. Founded in 1996, the program was started in Portsmouth, VA by the Virginia Arts Festival. There are four elementary and three middle school Rhythm Project programs that feed the program's premiere performing ensemble, the All-Stars. The All-Stars is a year-round program for high school students that focuses on instilling discipline and dedication in students through performance and touring opportunities. Additionally, two high school programs complete the family of eleven Rhythm Project ensembles that serve the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach and Portsmouth.

The All-Stars, 2009, 2010, and 2019 Virginia International PANFest Grand Champions, have earned international acclaim and collaborated with many prominent artists. They have opened for Gladys Knight, shared the stage with pan artist Victor Provost and the Metropolitan Jazz Orchestra, and performed at the Royal Nova Scotia and Virginia International Tattoos. In May 2014, the group was featured on NPR's "From the Top" program showcasing outstanding talent in high school students.

