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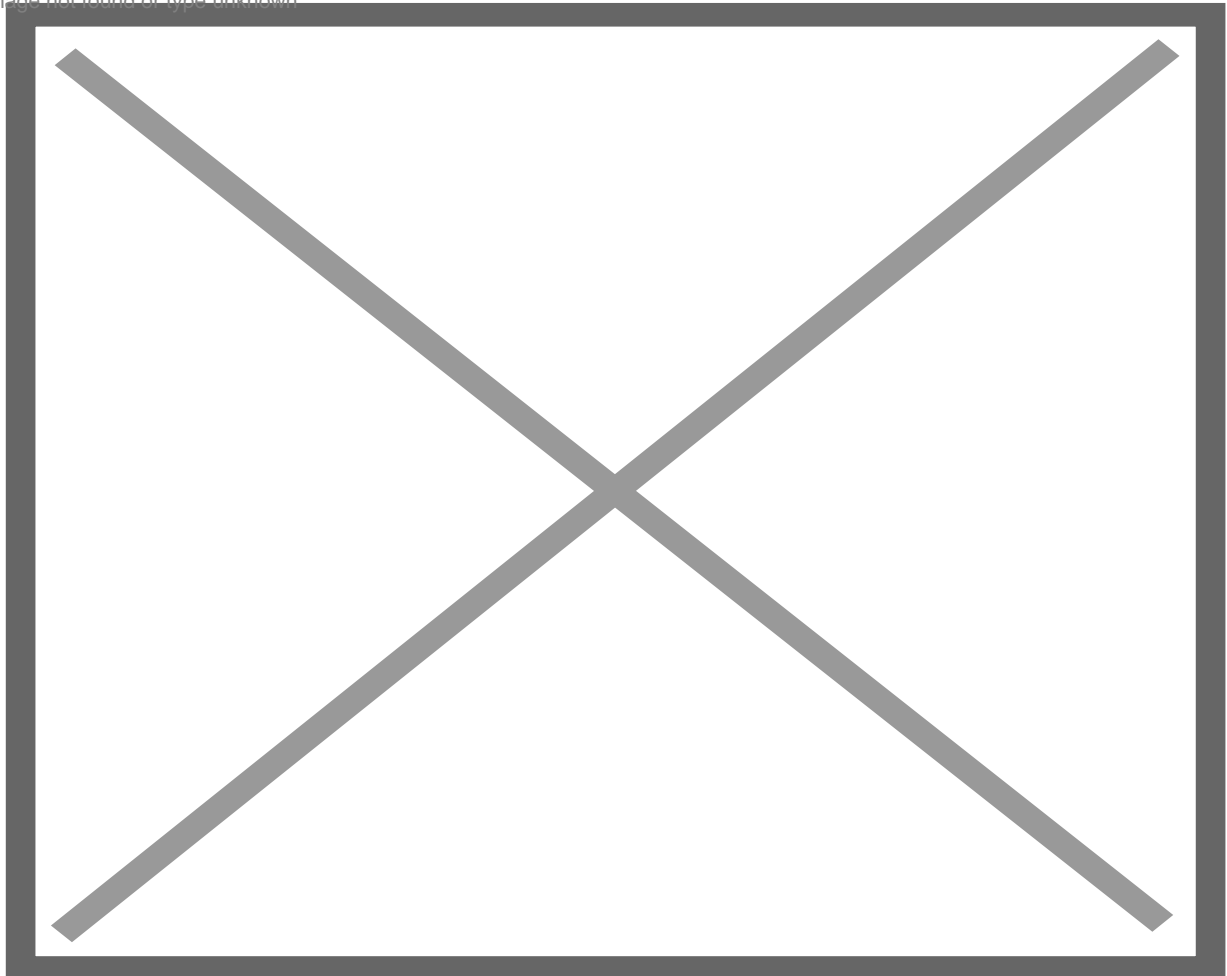
Love City Pan Dragons Prepping For Exciting Christmas Concert To Cap "Year of Growth and Renewal"

Fundraising concert marks new chapter for USVI's pan dragons

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Janeka Simon **December 05, 2023**

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Love City Pan Dragons with Congressional Delegate Stacey Plaskett Backstage at the CBC Annual Legislative Conference By. LOVE CITY PAN DRAGONS

Preparations are in full swing for the Love City Pan Dragons Christmas Concert, with players practicing new pieces for the panside's holiday repertoire, says Andrea Milam, Love City's Executive Director.

"The last 12 months have been a time of growth and renewal for the Pan Dragons," says Ms. Milam, part of which was the acquisition of a grant that allowed the group to hire her – its first

paid executive director. Working under the direction of the Pan Dragons' board, now headed by Ronald Lee Jr. – a young St. Johnian who grew up with the pan group – Ms. Milam guided the group towards participation in the St. Thomas Children's Parade for the first time in years.

The Pan Dragons also treated 3,000 people to the sweet sounds of steel pan during this year's Day of Healing at the Congressional Black Caucus' Annual Legislative Conference in Washington DC. During the trip, players also availed themselves of the opportunity to spend an afternoon with the Cultural Academy for Excellence's steel pan program, which Ms. Milam says served to foster crucial relationships between Pan Dragons players and the youth in the Virginia-based arts academy. "The trip was incredibly impactful and has inspired myself and the board to provide a similar trip at least once a year for our players," the executive director said.

This year's fundraising concert marks the beginning of efforts towards a planned trip to Antigua in summer 2024, the home country of Pan Dragons instructor/arranger Ikema Dyer. The USVI pan side will join Ms. Dyer's home band the Cool & Smooth Ebonites to perform in Antigua's Panorama in 2024.

"We are very excited to expose our players to the culture of another island," said Mr. Milam, "and for them to see a bigger, more active pan scene than they are used to." Fundraising efforts will continue through the year, as Pan Dragons hopes to raise \$50,000 to cover the cost of the trip.

Asked to provide some hints as to the set list for this year's concert, Ms. Milam disclosed that some new pieces would be part of the repertoire, including Mariah Carey's seasonal anthem "All I Want For Christmas Is You." Opening act Ronald Lee Jr, who studied music at George Mason University under St. John's Victor Provost, actually arranged and taught some of the songs that will be performed on December 23.

Ms. Milam says she hopes the public will turn out in large numbers to support Pan Dragons holiday concert, as she believes the group is an important part of the community. The impact of pan on the youth of the territory is undeniable, Ms. Milam says.

"In addition to the positive effects of learning music...our players learn the benefit of working with others toward a common goal," the executive director told Consortium journalists. "The band becomes like a family, providing an additional support system outside of the home to keep players on track."

In addition to the benefits to individual players, an active pan side helps the community as a whole by keeping Caribbean culture alive, Ms. Milam continued.

Tickets for the concert, which will be held at the St. John School of the Arts from 5 pm on the 23rd, cost \$15. Inquiries can be made by calling (340) 690 - 2420, or tickets can be purchased using [PayPal](#).