

Written for the 88.7 KTRM Website by Mariah Shields

Instruments straight from a small island off the coast of South America will be featured in a concert this Monday. The Steel Band will be performing their first full-length concert using steel pans, which were hand-crafted in Trinidad and shipped to Kirksville, Missouri.

Dr. Michael Bump, director of the band, said the process to creating this band has been years in the making, but the results are clear. "It's been great fun seeing this idea come to fruition. It's been a real joy to watch the music sparkle in everybody's eyes. I would bet most anything that anybody who comes to hear a steel drum band like ours play cannot possibly walk away with anything other than a smile on their face and a shuffle in their feet," he said.

The pans are part of a cultural tradition in Trinidad, which Dr. Bump saw first-hand on his trip to Trinidad. The drums are made from 55 gallon oil drums that were left by the US Navy during World War I. The tops are cut off, and then craftsmen pound the metal to create specific pitches.

Students in the band are from a variety of different backgrounds. Some aren't even music majors. However, Dr. Bump said there is little technical experience needed to learn to play the instrument. The music is taught the same way here as in Trinidad, by ear and memorization based on repetition.

Still, band member Emily Pierson said there is a steep learning curve to learn to play an instrument that the band members have never touched before. Learning involves extensive practice, but she said that the results are contagious and infectious music.

The concert pieces will be a wide variety of styles, from the traditional Caribbean calypso to jazz fusion pieces. The concert is Monday April 29 at 8:00 p.m. in the Ophelia Parrish Performance Hall. Admission is free.