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Ouachita News Bureau

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For immediate release

Ouachita Tiger Steel flag flown in Trinidad and Tobago

By Kaitlyn Stoddard

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For more information, contact Ouachita's Office of Communications & Marketing at comm-mark@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Tiger Steel, Ouachita Baptist University's advanced steel drum ensemble, was chosen to have its emblem flag flown in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), in the fall as part of the country's recognition of Steelpan Month. Ouachita was one of the first two universities chosen for inclusion in the third annual Barry Mannette Steelpan Flying High Global Flag Exhibition, part of the Steelpan One World Initiative.

"It's wonderful to have our steel band recognized and honored this way in the country where steel drums originated! It's kind of similar to our flags in the plaza on campus," said Dr. Ryan Lewis, professor of music and interim dean of the School of Fine Arts at Ouachita.

Lewis will join Tiger Steel for the group's performance during the spring Steel Drum Concert on Wednesday, May 3, at 8 p.m. in Jones Performing Arts Center. Admission is free for the concert, which will mark the 10th anniversary of Tiger Steel and include a performance by Ouachita's beginning steel drum ensemble, Pan Jouvét.

The purple and white Tiger Steel flag was designed by Chloe Spraggins, a senior music major from Hot Springs who has been a member of the steel drum ensemble since her first semester at Ouachita.

"Tiger Steel has been one of the best parts of my college career," she said. "We all have so much fun together, and I was honored by represent such an awesome group of people. Ouachita's music program is truly something special and I'm proud to be a part of it."

When Lewis asked Spraggins last spring to design the flag, he told her it would be flown in Trinidad during the steelpan exhibition.

"I was really excited," Spraggins recalled. "I wanted the design to be fun and went through quite a few drafts, but I ended up loving the tie-dye look. I consulted a few friends before submitting the final version, and then off it went to be displayed in Port-of-Spain."

Lewis said that a steel drummer from Trinidad who lives in Little Rock recommended Tiger Steel to be represented in the Steelpan Month celebration.

According to a news release from *SteelpanTV*, "Steelpan Flying High is a concept that illustrates both cultural and national pride of the bands and brands on show. The original concept showcases beautiful pieces of artwork: steel band logos."

The flags of 27 steel bands from 11 countries were flown in the Brian Lara Promenade in Port-of-Spain, T&T's capital. They remained there throughout August and most of September for the country's Diamond Jubilee celebration of Independence.

Of these 27 steel bands, only two were university bands: Tiger Steel and New York University's NYU Steel. Ouachita and NYU contributed two of the five new steel bands signing on to the growing Steelpan Flying High project. The other 25 steel bands were from orchestras and music academies from countries including Antigua and Barbuda, New Zealand, Belize, Germany, Japan, St. Lucia, South Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom and Spain.

Sophia Ward, a senior biology major from Fayetteville, Ark. said, "We first heard about this wonderful opportunity in May and then learned that our flag was flying in Port-of-Spain this fall. It was such an honor for us as the steel drums originated in Trinidad and Tobago, and we were one of the few groups from the U.S. to be a part of Steelpan Authority's Flying High exhibition."

"I was beyond thrilled. Our flag was going to be flown next to others representing the best pan groups in the world," she added.

Since her sophomore year, Ward has played tenor steel drum for Tiger Steel. In her time in the steel band, she has been able to learn the rich history of the steelpan.

"We learn about steel pan culture like the origin, current composers and Panorama, the world's best Steel Pan competition. In Tiger Steel, we learn Panorama pieces written for the competition that are challenging, but once we work out the details, it's amazing to see what we can do! Alongside our Panorama pieces, we learn how to play a variety of music selections like pop songs, Caribbean music and more."

Ward and the rest of Tiger Steel were able to share steelpan with others before spring break last year.

"We performed at Silver Dollar City right at the entrance for those who were on spring break," she said. "Some of the visitors had never seen steel pans before, and it made people happy to hear our music while waiting to get into the park."

For information about Tiger Steel, the band's spring concert or Ouachita's [Division of Music](#), contact Dr. Ryan Lewis at lewisr@obu.edu or at (870) 245-5128.