

CRIMSON

In the short years that I have enjoyed with steel pan, I have often dreamt of a piece that would break with the idiom of jump-up music and Caribbean beach-side songs, challenging the sound of steel drum bands to innovate even more than they already have. Of course we can find countless examples of Soca and other forms of fusion, but what I was aiming for in composing *Crimson*, was a whole new approach all together.

Andy Narrell's pieces, "Songlines" and "Green Ballet" stand as a wonderful springboard to what it is I speak of. Combining that texture with the concepts of pieces such as Steve Reich's, "Electric Counterpoint" and Sting's "Seven Days", one might begin to understand where it is that I hope to see a handful of steel band performances land, even if only for a brief moment in time. Like any instrument, the steel pan should not feel obligated just to revel in the sounds of its past, but also, to be willing to explore the future.

An unaccompanied steel band, giving way to a more traditional soca, only in three-four time, then featuring an improvised lead solo, followed by a more samba/funk infused recapitulation and development into an almost minimalist ending is the challenge that this piece offers. While the title *Crimson* does remind me of the character Atticus, from the American classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Crimson* is meant to reflect the broad, elusive sound for which it is that I have so long wished to hear a complete song dedicated to in the genre of steel pan music.

The individual parts are written to lie well on each performer's pan and hold moderate challenges, save a run here and there. Like so many things, they look harder than they are – so be patient and marvel at the ease of progress. This piece is dedicated to Mr. Scott Prebys and the University of Mary Steel Drum Band for so much life and so many incredible musical experiences. May God always bless their endeavors as well as yours. (2001)

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