

1. Full bio

Award-winning artist, composer and educator Josanne Francis began playing steelpan at age 9 in her native twin-island Republic of Trinidad & Tobago. While her expression presents unmatched technical mastery of her instrument and its legacy, Josanne's true sound delivers an energetic and emotional complexity that enchants listeners across the world. Particularly in live performance, she engages lyrical depth, motion and harmonic experimentation. Crafting spontaneous, haunting melodies in diverse small ensembles and powerful resonance in large steelbands, Josanne approaches her instrument with great reverence for its versatility, a perspective through which she promotes cultural exchange on the bandstand as well as away from it.

Committed to expanding the influence of her instrument into non-traditional spaces, Josanne performs across the world in a range of contexts, alongside artists of varying styles and lineages. She has appeared at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Strathmore Music Center, Times Square, and Port-au-Prince International Jazz Festival (PAP Jazz), among other iconic venues and events. An in-demand collaborator, Josanne has performed live — in person and virtually — with a number of renowned artists, including David Rudder, Etienne Charles, Negah Santos, Jon Batiste, Kes, Andy Narell, mentor Liam Teague, and the Mighty Sound of Maryland marching band. She has appeared with the Michigan Philharmonic and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and recorded on projects for Charles, Victor Provost, The Mawasi Experience, and Afro Bop Alliance. In 2023, Josanne is poised to release her debut album as a leader.

Education and inclusion are inextricably linked elements of Josanne's work. She is a global minister of the music, receiving the 2022 Vanguard Award presented at Caribbean American Heritage (CARAH) Gala & Awards, and the Rising Leader Award, presented by his excellency Anthony Phillips-Spencer, Trinidad & Tobago Ambassador to the United States. She has garnered grants from U.S. Artists International, Maryland State Arts Council and Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council. Josanne recently delivered a TEDx presentation and, this past year, she received a commission from the San Jacinto College Central Steelband to complete a multi-movement gesture for steelband titled "Carnival Suite." Premiered in

November, the piece reflects different traditional carnival characters of Trinidad & Tobago.

Josanne received her bachelor of music education from the University of Southern Mississippi, and her master of music in steelpan performance from Northern Illinois University. As she pursues her doctorate in music education from the University of Maryland, the prolific artist continues to engage her local and global communities as an instrumentalist and a scholar. She has taught lessons, clinics, courses and masterclasses at venues and institutions across the nation, including the University of Delaware, the University of Maryland and the Cultural Academy for Excellence in the D.C. metropolitan area. Her artistic residencies include those at Michigan State University, Strathmore Music Center as Artist in Residence and Johns Hopkins Peabody Institute; she also has served on multiple panels at Strathmore Music Center, multiple grant review panels for Maryland State Arts Council and on the Caribbean Perspectives on Incorporating Steelpan History and Culture into U.S. Steelband Rehearsals panel at the national conference of the 2022 National Society for Steelband Educators. In 2022, Josanne created the thriving performance outfit Elite Pan Consortium in partnership with fellow artist Sherwin Thwaites and, in 2019, she launched Steel on Wheels LLC, an all-inclusive educational program that eliminates barriers for the creation and development of steelbands, and varied percussion ensembles including West African drumming, bucket drumming and samba.

Josanne continues to expand her unique, steelpan-driven artistry in new directions. In fall 2022, she collaborated as a recording artist on the viral steelpan Google Doodle and arranged and co-directed the groundbreaking Big 10 Maryland vs. Michigan halftime show featuring the Maryland Steelpan Collective and the Mighty Sound of Maryland Marching Band. To keep up with Josanne's performance and teaching schedule, visit her website josannefrancis.com and follow her on social media @josannefrancis.

