

Born to Sing

Everyday Voices | People



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Even those who might have had one too many the night before somehow find their voices singing with all their heart, perhaps from the corner of their lungs, seeking forgiveness through song.

Despite their now dwindling numbers, the Poreporena Choir continues to sing with the same passion and harmony that once made them the pride of the village. Their voices still carry the

warmth and power of years gone by.

For the longest time, I thought the choir was the creation of the late Mayor of Port Moresby and former Moresby North-West Member, Mahuru Rarua. But my curiosity led me further back, to a man named Mr. John Spychiger, one of the early choir masters who helped shape this musical legacy.

Being someone who's always curious about my "place"; where things began, how they evolved, I did some digging (Yes, I have spare time so why waste it). I wanted to specifically know: How did they really sing? What was the audience reception to their performance?

My search led me to an old article published in The Herald (Melbourne) in 1933. Yes, they got that far.

The description of the choir's performance gave me goosebumps. The energy, the dedication and even the size of the group compared to today was quite astonishing. It made me think: We were born to sing, weren't we?

Here's what the paper wrote:

“Sixty enthusiastic young Papuan natives, girls and boys, attend choir practice every Friday night at Hanuabada - the big village.

They are found in a hall, sometimes squatting on the bare floor, sometimes standing while singing; their dark eyes follow the conductor's baton. The boys wear loincloths, and the girls, the age-old grass skirt - the rami.” (Note - Think of your grandparents)

“The baton descends, and as one voice, the Poreporena Choir leaps into life. Perhaps they sing English words set to the Grand March from Tannhäuser. Though they may not understand every word, they sing with fervour, responding to the conductor's cues with emotion and power.”

“The Poreporena Choir of Papua has an endowment which makes up for its lack of technical training, an uncanny gift for blending their voices in perfect harmony. Their enthusiasm, sprinkled with humour and joy, makes every rehearsal and performance a delight to hear. To listen to them sing justifies every drop of sweat shed by their devoted conductor.”

The Poreporena Choir didn’t just sing. They defined what it meant to have music in our blood.

Pic: A familiar place where the beautiful voices of the Poreporena Choir once echoed through the halls of Poreporena Church. Their harmonies were so powerful that even today, you can still hear, in memory, the voice of a loved one who once stood and sang among them.

We were, and still are, born to sing.

Blessed Sunday!

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