

Melody and Mirth at Coloured Concert

Kempsey Catholic Hall was filled to capacity one night recently when aborigines from Burnt Bridge, Bowraville, Bellbrook, Greenhill and Taree, assisted by six Thursday Island natives, presented a very entertaining variety programme.

The entertainment was particularly notable for its gaiety and high musical standard, and the excellent stage presence of the majority of its performers.

Actually, the concert was a night to remember, the dark-eyed children of the forest, blessed with a risible gift that almost makes laughter their business, also demonstrating their remarkable sense of harmony and the production of harmonical tones, no matter whether their medium was a gumleaf, a piece of plastic ribbon, a ukelele, an electric guitar, a piano, or merely their vocal chords without accompaniment.

A quartet from Taree dug "Whispering Hope" out of the long ago, a sweet revival; and Charlie Edwards, who capably compered the show, gave a very fine unaccompanied rendition of "A Man Called Peter".

With Mrs. F. Nolan conducting, and Mrs. Brogden providing the pianoforte accompaniment, the girls' choirs from Burnt Bridge and Greenhill sang lustily, happily and with full appreciation of the beauty of the numbers they were presenting.

Prior to the opening of the programme, Charlie Edwards advised the audience to "just sit back and relax; take off your coats, stretch your legs and enjoy the items the artists will present to you", and that was how it was for the rest of the evening.

Even the organiser, Rev. Father Hoade, and his several assistants, soon realised that nothing could go wrong, for the show very nearly ran itself.

Max Ridgeway, who plays a guitar, mouth organ and bass drum all at once, was well matched by Mick Donovan, whose technique as a pianist is a credit to his tuition when he was a lad attending Bowraville Convent School.

Fred Mumbler and Ivan Ballengarry enthralled the audience with their performance on the gumleaf, Ballengarry's presentation of "The Rose of Taree" having a delightful tonal quality reminiscent of a trumpet.

Reuben Pacey, with his steel guitar, was something to listen to; and then, with his brothers (Harry, Lyle, Andrew, William and Harold Pacey), he gave a tuneful vocalisation of "Tumbling Tumbleweed".

Arthur Waters and Chris Dotti (impersonator) caused a good deal of merriment; and Mavis Long sang a bracket of songs with Cyril Davis.

One of the highlights of the evening was Marlene Silva's singing of "Danny Boy", her lovely liquid soprano showing a tonal quality both attractive and unusual.

A Bowraville choral group contributed several numbers; and Chris Dotti got more than a laugh with his aping of a fearsome gorilla.

The Thursday Island boys (Rusty Anda, Jimmy Anda, Wally Wallet, Eric Anan, Tony Marama and Benny Toby) stripped to the buff (shorts, of course, and a wisp of cretonne) and gave a series of weird corroboree dances, marked by a fascinating rhythm of stamping and sinuous undulation.

Even more reminiscent of the jungle, however, was a grotesque burlesque of a hulahula dance, cleverly presented by one of the Islanders.

Altogether a very good show, and reflecting very great credit on the innumerable aborigines, who took part.

Most gratifying was the fact that, despite the continuing raucous clamour of rock 'n roll, guitars with catarrh, off-key tenors screaming in idiotic frenzy, and the ever-recurring throb of syncopated tom-toms, the aborigines of the Macleay still retained the essence and appreciation of musical perfection, even if their only medium were a gumleaf.

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BURNT BRIDGE TEAMS AT NEWCASTLE

The Waratahs and Sunbeams, two aborigine teams of marching girls from Burnt Bridge, were recently invited to march in Newcastle. The invitation follows their appearance in Coffs Harbour and was extended by the national president of the Australian Girls' Marching Association, Mr. Tindall. Travelling expenses were covered by the Newcastle Association.

Mr. Tindall said there was national interest in the aborigine teams: the first two aborigine teams of marching girls to be formed in Australia.

Members of the Newcastle Guards, who also marched in Coffs Harbour, equipped the girls with boots before they travelled south.

In Newcastle, the girls were privately billeted.

In their first public appearance the Burnt Bridge marchers came home with two third placings in the North Coast championships.

The girls travelled by special bus to Coffs Harbour with their president, Mrs. Lang, and two chaperones, Mesdames Campbell and Davis.

The Board has awarded the girls with a Certificate of Commendation for their proficiency in display. The Certificate is proudly displayed at the Station.