



A Tribute – Harley Mead

Over three hundred sets of eager young eyes are glued to the stage. Who is this funny man in the bright sparkled jacket from Australia? For a moment in time they forget their empty bellies, shattered lives and humble origins and are mesmerized. Having only seen a few 'Mzungus' (white men) in their short lifetimes, the shy children from the slums of Kampala don't quite know what to make of Harley Mead as he sings, jumps, dances and slaps himself silly in an effort to entertain and make this a day they will never forget.

Apart from musically leading the KwaYa choir, made up of thirty five community choir members from Australia coming together to volunteer and perform in Uganda, Harley has been given the challenging job of amusing these special children until The Queen of Buganda arrives at the free concert hosted by KwaYa Australia in partnership with The African Children's Choir.

The crowd cries out and moans with displeasure as the power dies and we can no longer hear Harley or the music. That's what happens in third world countries, conditions are harsh and things very rarely go to plan. These children from the slums are used to going without and suffering let downs but there isn't going to be any disappointment today, not if Harley Mead has anything to do with it.

Harley leaps from the stage landing amidst the surprised but delighted children. It is evident the language barrier is irrelevant as his voice booms across their heads leading them in a crazy dance across the palace gardens.

It is a sight both Ugandans and Australians remember with fondness and awe until today. Wild laughter mixed with squeals of joy set the backing track for the spectacular vision of Uncle Harley leading an ecstatic, animated charge of bedraggled children across the manicured lawns. That moment of sheer unabated happiness shining from not only the faces of the children but Harley himself, will forever remain etched in the minds of those who had the privilege of working with him. From that day forward Harley Mead has been affectionately known as "The Pied Piper of Uganda".

KwaYa Australia and The African Children's Choir thank Uncle Harley for his love, dedication and professionalism on tour in Uganda. For always selflessly putting the children and his choir members first. Harley, you will forever remain a part of our hearts.

How lucky the angels are to have you.

Marsha Gusti President KwaYa Australia 3 Oct 2014