

Singapore Polytechnic Choir in the 80's

Written by Alicia Chan

How many people have witnessed and experienced the growth of Singapore Polytechnic (SP) from its very first phase? The proficient Mr Tan Liong Kiat, one of the longest servicing lecturers in School of Mechanical & Aeronautical Engineering that has been serving SP since 1977, has.

63-year old Mr Tan started working in SP as a lecturer at the age of 26 after attaining a degree in the United Kingdom. During his early days, Mr Tan was active with student clubs as an advisor and was in-charge of several Co-Curricular Activities, one of them being the SP Choir.

SP Choir back in those days

When SP Choir first formed in early 1985, Mr Tan was the first advisor and he took pride in his responsibility. However, being only an advisor was not enough for the passionate and enthusiastic singing lecturer. 4 years later, in 1989, Mr Tan, together with a few colleagues laid the first stone to SP's staff choir. Staff of SP would come together during lunch hours and their free time to rehearse their singing. The staff choir was more than just for pure leisure but rather a chance to trumpet the abilities of SP's staff.

Around August every year, Mr Tan and his colleagues in the staff choir would participate in the annual National Day song competition held by the government. When asked if they have won anything from it, the humble lecturer answered that they were just an average group and received no more than just a merit award. Their attitude of never giving up displays their determination and portrays a good example for their students to follow.



Senior Lecturer Mr Tan Liong Kiat

Staff and students bonding over the same interest

In an effort to bond both staff and students, the SP Choir and staff choir used to perform at the Victoria Concert Hall once a year. Not only was the staff choir popular within the campus, but Mr Tan said that they were also invited to Spain to perform their concert together with the Teacher Choir under the Ministry of Education, which was a rare opportunity.



SP's staff choir in Spain, together with Teacher Choir of Ministry of Education.

As the advisor of the SP Choir, Mr Tan also brought the students out every Christmas for Christmas caroling and was in charge as the conductor of the choir.



Mr Tan as a conductor for SP Choir's Christmas Caroling

In Mr Tan's 38 years of service in SP, his favourite memory was not actually being able to take charge of the choir, but rather to be able to bring the SP Choir to New Zealand. Getting along well with his students was one of the things that Mr Tan enjoys. Mr Tan added that meeting new students each year is what keeps him going from his daily mundane routine, and that student makes SP a "nice place to work (in)."

Bringing a halt to his co-curricular activity

Unfortunately, due to the hectic schedule of the staff, the staff choir had to disband in 1995. That, had to be Mr Tan's biggest regret in SP. "If I had the chance, I'd like to bring back the staff choir," Mr Tan said without hesitation, "if we can bring the staff back to sing together, that would be fantastic."