

Zubir Said: the composer of Majulah Singapura

Zubir Rohana, author

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Abstrak

Zubir Said is best known as the composer of Majulah Singapura, the national anthem of Singapore, Semoga Bahagia, the Singapore school anthem, and Melayu Raya. Born into a humble and religious family in Sumatra where music was considered haram, at 21 he set out to seek his fortune in Singapore, attracted initially by the glittering lights and the availability of butter and kopi susu, but soon by the opportunities it offered him to pursue his dreams. Armed with his first musical instrument, a bamboo flute he had carved himself, and a basic knowledge of music number notations, Zubir taught himself to read, write and compose music. Despite the many challenges he faced, he became a musical icon of the 1950s and 1960s on both sides of the Straits of Johor, at a time when Independence was the clarion call and nationalist fervour was running high.