

Pass It On®...

From the NFL to the Opera: When Life Changes, Change your Dreams.

Ta'u Pupu'a grew up in Tonga playing football and singing in the school choir. His massive size and athletic drive propelled him to a career with the Baltimore Ravens. When an injury ended his playing time, he switched to his other passion: opera.

The Kingdom of Tonga is the Pacific's last ruling monarchy. The pageantry and paternalism provide a rich background for a young boy. The culture, the honor in family, the respect for tradition, were not lost on Ta'u Pupu'a. Even after moving away at a young age, his heritage and cultural legacy will always be a part of him — as will the duality of the artist and the warrior.

Growing up, "I would go to choir practice every day, and then off to football practice," Pupu'a says. "I love the passion of physical competition and the passion of performance that brings people to tears."

Playing for legendary coach Bill Belichick, who initially drafted him, brought enormous expectations and prepared Pupu'a for the big stage. And he has earned accolades. After a performance in Italy, the Italian Tribune wrote: "Everyone took notice at his brilliant tone, breath-control and ravishing, powerful tenor. Ta'u Pupu'a brought reserves of stentorian power and heroic strength."

"Both football and opera take a lot of discipline," Pupu'a says. "They are both physical, and both have their moments of truth. You sack the quarterback, or you hit the notes so perfectly every member of the audience feels it in their bones."

It all comes down to having a passion for what you do, no matter what you put your talents toward. Sport and theater both capture and magnify the deepest human emotions: love, hate, fear, tragedy, life and death, redemption.

"Each emotion has a separate energy. I want the audience to feel that energy. I want to be part of that energy in every play, every aria."

Getting to that level takes an enormous amount of practice and discipline. Habits formed on the

football field helped Pupu'a make the transition to his training at Juilliard.

He was blessed with a booming voice, but that was only the beginning. Learning a piece takes time, especially if the words are in Italian or German. There are language nuances, character background stories, historical context, and bringing your own voice and personality to the role. What is too much? What needs a little more emphasis?

"It takes me three months to learn an opera," Pupu'a says. But the payback is worth it. Pupu'a loves introducing his art to children. "They come in restless, can't sit still. But the music starts, and they go silent; the reaction on their faces is priceless."

Singing opera in a venue is done without microphones. The voice has to carry all the way to the back row, touching every person as if they were the only one hearing the music.

That's the magic of the best performers. They make us feel like we are the only person alive in that moment. We experience a personal connection, the notes of a live performance resonating in our bones and the human story sweeping us up into the plot, that makes us a hero for a day.

Sing your Song...[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

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