

THOMAS, DAVID VAUGHAN (1873 - 1934), musician

Name: David Vaughan Thomas
Date of birth: 1873
Date of death: 1934
Spouse: Morfydd Thomas (née Lewis)
Parent: Jenkin Thomas
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music
Authors: Arthur Spencer Vaughan Thomas, Llewelyn Gwyn Chambers

Born 15 March 1873 at Ystalyfera, Glamorganshire, son of Jenkin Thomas. He took the name Vaughan in 1911 when he became a member of the Gorsedd of Bards in Carmarthen *eisteddfod*. He attended **Walcyn Wyn's** school in Ammanford, and from 1873 to 1883 the family lived in Ystalyfera, Llantrisant, Maesteg, Llangennech and Dowlais. The family moved to Pontardulais, and Vaughan Thomas received his early musical education from **Dr. Joseph Parry**, Swansea. He went to Llandoverly College, from which he gained an open mathematical scholarship to Exeter College, Oxford. He graduated 3rd class at Oxford in 1895, M.A. 1905, B.Mus. 1906, D.Mus. 1911. After leaving Oxford he taught mathematics in the United Services College, Westward Ho!, and then returned to Wales to start his musical career. He married, 1906, Morfydd Lewis, Pontardulais, by whom he had three sons. One of their sons was the broadcaster **Wynford Vaughan-Thomas**. The family lived for many years in Swansea. He made an unsuccessful application for the post of Music Director of the University of Wales in 1919. In 1927 he was appointed overseas examiner to Trinity College of Music, London, and travelled extensively in the Commonwealth and British Empire. He died at Johannesburg, South Africa, 15 September 1934.

His chief works include 'Llyn y Fan,' first performed at the national eisteddfod of Wales at Swansea in 1907, and again at Wrexham in 1912; 'A Song for St. Cecilia's Day' (Queen's Hall, London, 1909); and 'The Bard' (Queen's Hall, London, 1912). He wrote a large number of anthems, songs, and part songs, for both Welsh and English lyrics, and left a considerable body of instrumental work, most of which is still unpublished.

As a composer Vaughan Thomas is best remembered for the originality and scholarship which he brought to his settings of Welsh poetry, especially in his 'Saith o Ganeuon.' Less well known, but equally notable for their lyrical beauty, are his songs on English words by George Meredith. Vaughan Thomas was a pioneer in the movement to lead Welsh music forward from a limited choralism to a more sensitive practice and appreciation of other musical forms. In his lectures and recitals, and in his programme planning for the national eisteddfod, he gave a vigorous lead towards new standards.

The work of Vaughan Thomas is pervaded by an imaginative enthusiasm for the characteristic qualities of a national culture and their distinctive expression in music.

Authors

Arthur Spencer Vaughan Thomas, (1907 - 1973)

Dr Llewelyn Gwyn Chambers

Sources

Personal knowledge

The Times, 17 September 1934

T. Haydn Thomas, *Welsh Music, the journal of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music*, 4 (1973), 2

Ifor ap Gwilym, *Y Traddodiad Cerddorol yng Nghymru* (Abertawe 1978), 35

Further Reading

David Vaughan Thomas (1873-1934), Discover Welsh Music website, viewed 7 March 2018

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [D. Vaughan Thomas Music Manuscripts and papers](#)

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