

JONES, DANIEL JENKYN (1912-1993), composer

Name: Daniel Jenkyn Jones
Date of birth: 1912
Date of death: 1993
Gender: Male
Occupation: composer
Area of activity: Music
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Daniel Jones was born on 7 December 1912 in Pembroke, the second son of Jenkyn Davies Jones, a bank manager, and his wife Margaret Falconer Jones. The family moved soon afterwards to Swansea, and Daniel Jones's name is inextricably linked with that city. His father was a composer and his mother a singer, and he showed early musical promise. As a pupil at Swansea Grammar School he became a close friend of **Dylan Thomas**. The two remained close friends until **Dylan**'s death in 1953; Jones edited a complete edition of **Thomas**'s poems, and recorded his recollections of the poet in his volume *My Friend Dylan Thomas* (1977). The two of them belonged to a cultural circle in Swansea which included the artist Alfred Janes and the poet **Vernon Watkins**. Jones went to University College Swansea and graduated in English in 1934: he gained his MA in 1939 for a thesis on Elizabethan literature and its relation to the music of the period. Between 1934 and 1939 he studied composition with Harry Farjeon and conducting with Sir Henry Wood at the Royal Academy of Music, and won the Mendelssohn Scholarship for his compositions in 1935. He travelled widely in Europe and mastered several languages, and during the Second World War as a Captain in the Intelligence Corps, he worked at Bletchley, decoding cryptograms.

Daniel Jones's first symphony, performed in 1945, is generally acknowledged to be the earliest symphony of any significance by a Welsh composer. In 1950 he won the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize for his *Prologue* for orchestra, and it was he who composed the incidental music for the classic 1954 production of *Under Milk Wood*. He took a great interest in structures and complex patterns in nature, and this is reflected in his music, where he uses complex rhythms and time signatures. He interested himself in the folk music of many countries, but did not make obvious use of traditional Welsh music in his work. Because he avoided the fashions of the day in music he was rated by some a traditional composer, but because he retained his individuality in his compositions, he succeeded in writing music which is both contemporary and accessible. He composed twelve symphonies and eight string quartets. His Fourth Symphony (1954) was dedicated to the memory of **Dylan Thomas**, and he also wrote, in addition to the twelve, a symphonic work in memory of John Fussell (1933-1990), the director of the Swansea Music Festival. His opera *The Knife* was performed at Sadler's Wells. His choral works are lyrical and singable: *The Country Beyond the Stars*, to words by **Henry Vaughan**, was written in 1958, and in 1977 he composed a series of choral settings of William Blake, entitled *Hear the Voice of the Bard*. He received a number of commissions from the BBC, the National Eisteddfod and Welsh music festivals. In 1961 he delivered the annual lecture of the BBC in Wales, *Music in Wales*, in which he set out his ideas on the relationship of art and national character.

He married in 1936 Eunice Bedford and in 1950 Irene Goodchild. There were three daughters of the first marriage and a son and daughter of the second. He died at his home in Newton near Swansea on 23 April 1993. His manuscripts are preserved at the National Library of Wales.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

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Lyn Davies, 'Daniel Jones', *Taliesin* 83, 1993, 108-10

The Independent, 28 April 1993

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Further Reading

Daniel Jones (1912-1993), Discover Welsh Music website, viewed 7 March 2018

Lyn Davies, 'Jones, Daniel (1912-93)', *Cydymaith i Gerdoriaeth Cymru* (Talybont 2018), pp.275-76

Wikipedia Article: [Daniel Jones](#)

Additional Links

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