

WILLIAMS, MEIRION (1901-1976), musician

Name: Meirion Williams
Date of birth: 1901
Date of death: 1976
Parent: Mary Elizabeth Williams (née Roberts)
Parent: Robert Parry Williams
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

William Robert Williams was born on 19 July 1901 in Glanywern, Dyffryn Ardudwy. He began to use the name 'Meirion' when a student and adopted it officially during the Second World War. He was the son of Robert Parry Williams and Mary Elizabeth (née Roberts), the father a shopkeeper and sub-postmaster. His dark colouring was attributed by some to Italian ancestry on his mother's side. Meirion inherited musical gifts from his mother, who was an enthusiastic member of the local church choir. He had piano lessons from a blind teacher, J. L. Owen of Blaenau Ffestiniog, and when still a boy would play the organ at Llanddwywe and Llanenddwyn churches. At the age of eleven he went to Barmouth Secondary School, but left in 1914 to work in the family shop. In 1919 he acted as an accompanist at the Harlech festival, where he came to the attention of **Walford Davies**, who admitted him to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, but as he had not obtained his School Certificate he could not pursue a degree course. While at Aberystwyth he took piano lessons from G. Stephen Evans, the organist of St Michael's church. In 1922 he went to the Royal Academy of Music in London where he studied piano with Carlo Albanesi and Edgar Carr. He won several prizes and medals there, including the Academy's chief prize for solo piano; he took the LRAM diploma in 1927 and later the ARAM. He performed as a piano soloist in the Wigmore Hall and elsewhere in London, establishing himself as a freelance musician in London. He was organist and choirmaster of Eglwys Dewi Sant in London from 1931 to 1937, and organist of the Church of the Ascension in Wembley from 1937 to 1948. From 1930 to 1932 and again in 1934 he was the principal accompanist of the Harlech Festival. He married on 25 August 1932 in London Gwendolen Margaret Roberts, and they had one daughter.

At the outset of the Second World War he returned to Dyffryn Ardudwy and worked on the land, before moving back to London in 1942 to work with ENSA and CEMA. He was the accompanist to the tenor **David Lloyd** on a series of recordings of Welsh songs made by Decca in 1948 for the 'Welsh Recorded Music Society'. From 1951 onwards he was the organist of Eglwys Sant Bened in London, and frequently accompanied at meetings of the Freemasons. He would return regularly to Wales to adjudicate at eisteddfodau and was a frequent adjudicator at the National Eisteddfod.

He was taken ill on his way to play the piano at a Freemasons' meeting, and died on the way to Middlesex Hospital, St Marylebone, 4 October 1976. His funeral was held on 12 October 1976 in Dyffryn Ardudwy, and his remains were interred at Llanenddwyn church. A memorial service was held at Eglwys Sant Bened in London on 27 October 1976.

He came to prominence as a composer, especially of songs, during the 1930s, and his lyrical settings of the poetry of **Eifion Wyn** ('Cwm Pennant', 'Mai'), **Caradog Prichard** ('Y Llyn'), **Crwys** ('Gwynfyd'), **Elfed** ('Pan ddaw'r nos') and **George Rees** ('O Fab y Dyn'), among others, are notable examples of the Welsh art song. He combined a sensitivity to words with a special gift for writing interesting accompaniments.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

Sioned Webb, *Meirion Williams - y gwr a'i grefft* (Bangor 1984)

Alun Davies, 'Meirion Williams', *The London Welshman* 28/16, 1976

Mansel Thomas, 'Meirion Williams (1901-1976): the Welsh Roger Quilter', *Welsh Music*, 5/5 (1977)

Further Reading

Meirion Williams (1901-1976), Discover Welsh Music website, viewed 7 March 2018

Wikipedia Article: [Meirion Williams](#)

Additional Links

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