

LEWIS, IDRIS (1889 - 1952), musician

Name: Idris Lewis
Date of birth: 1889
Date of death: 1952
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts
Author: Huw Williams

Born 21 November 1889, at Birchgrove, Llansamlet, Glamorganshire, son of a coalminer. He took an interest in music at an early age, gaining a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music in London when he was 16 years old, and he came into prominence as a pianist. After completing his musical education he toured India and the Far East, 1911-12, giving a series of piano recitals in some of the major cities there. Later he settled in London, where he became assistant musical director at Daly's Theatre, and musical director at the Lyric and Gaiety theatres (1915-27). He also served as organist at the Welsh chapel (Presb.) in Charing Cross (1923-26), and as conductor of the London-Welsh Choral Society. In 1927 he joined British International Pictures at Elstree, and as musical director for that company (1931-35) he was responsible for arranging music for a number of well-known films, *Blossom Time* ' being among them, with Richard Tauber as soloist.

One of those impressed by that film was **Sam Jones** , who was at the time producer of Welsh programmes with the B.B.C., and after realising that Idris Lewis was a Welshman he succeeded in persuading him to join the B.B.C. in Cardiff, where he became musical director of the Welsh region (1936-52), the first to be appointed to that post. He died at his home in Llandaff, 15 April 1952, and his remains were cremated in Glyntaff.

He is an important figure in the history of Welsh music, chiefly because of his pioneering work in broadcasting orchestral concerts from Cardiff. He was also responsible for arranging several series of popular vocal programmes on sound radio, including ' *Melys Lais* ' ; and ' *Cenwch im yr hen ganiadau* ' . Although he was not a prolific composer, he arranged a number of works for male voice choirs, and some of the songs from his setting of ' Alun Mabon ' (**Ceiriog**), which was first broadcast in 1935, remain popular on *eisteddfod* and concert platforms. He was the author of a useful volume *Cerddoriaeth yng Nghymru* (1945) which was translated into Welsh by Enid Parry.

His brother was D.H. Lewis, Llanelli, author of *Cofiant J.T. Rees*, and also of a number of articles on Welsh musicians which were published in *Y Genhinen* and other periodicals.

Author

Huw Williams, (1922 - 2002)

Sources

Complete Catalogue of Contemporary Welsh Music, 5, (1972)

Who's who in Music (London 1935)

Western Mail, 16 April 1952

information from Sam Jones in 1971

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Idris Lewis](#)

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [The Tŷ Cerdd Archive: Idris Lewis](#)

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