

PARRY-WILLIAMS, DAVID EWART (1900-1996), musician

Name: David Ewart Parry-williams
Date of birth: 1900
Date of death: 1996
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Born Glynneath, Glamorgan, 25 June 1900, the son of the village schoolmaster, Tom Williams, and his wife Mary Ann who ran the local Post Office. He received instruction in music from his uncle, who was the organist at Bethania chapel in Glynneath, and played the cello in a small orchestra at Bethania. When his uncle moved to London to be organist of Charing Cross Welsh chapel, the nephew visited him and heard professional organists in large churches for the first time. Following a period of service in the Navy at the end of the First World War he studied at the University College in Cardiff, graduating in chemistry and qualifying as a teacher; and he retained an interest in machinery throughout his life.

At the age of 23 he won a scholarship to study music in Cardiff under **Professor David Evans**: one of his contemporaries was the composer **Grace Williams**. He taught at the Cathedral School in Llandaff and at Lewis School, Pengam before being appointed a lecturer in the Education Department of the University College in Cardiff. He continued his music studies, gaining an LRAM diploma in piano playing, studying conducting under Adrian Boult in London, and graduating D.Mus. (Wales) in 1941. During the 1930s he was one of the first contributors to the BBC's music programmes for schools, and served as organist and choirmaster of Pembroke Terrace chapel.

In 1943 he was appointed Director of Music at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, in succession to **E. T. Davies**, and he was appointed to a Chair of Music at Bangor in 1963. During his time at Bangor he did much to develop the Music Department, fighting to establish degree courses in music, and appointing composers like Reginald Smith Brindle (his successor in the chair) and **William Mathias** to lectureships. He was an inspirational teacher well liked for his enthusiasm and sense of humour. Following his retirement in 1967 he returned to Cardiff.

Because of his dedication to teaching, he was not a prolific composer, but his 'Introduction and Allegro' was performed by the London Symphony Orchestra at the National Eisteddfod in Rhosllannerchrugog in 1945. His compositions are fastidiously crafted, and traditional in form and tonality, but he also took a lively interest in contemporary music. Several of his choral arrangements of folk-songs were published during his lifetime and after his death. His most successful publication was his textbook *A Music Course for Students* (1937), which circulated widely in schools within and outside Wales and which appeared in a Welsh-language version, *Elfennau Cerddoriaeth*, in 1938.

He adjudicated regularly at the National Eisteddfod and at the Llangollen Eisteddfod, founded the Harlech Summer School in Music, and served as the first Chairman of the Music Committee of the Welsh Arts Council from 1955 to 1962. He was a member of the Board of the University of Wales Press and of the panel which produced a glossary of music terms in Welsh, *Termau Cerddoriaeth* (1984).

He married Avarina Davies in 1931 and they had one daughter, Ann. He died in Cardiff on 10 September 1996.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

Welsh Music, the journal of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music, Winter 1991-2, Summer 1997

Y Goleuad, 8 November 1996

Y Traethodydd, 146 (1991)

Additional Links

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Published date: 2013-03-01

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