

# Ἑγκυκλοπαίδεια Ἀρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς Μουσικῆς

Μεγάλη ἑπιτυχία σημείωσε διεθνῶς ἡ προαβλεπόμενη ἀπὸ τὴν Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν «Ἑγκυκλοπαίδεια τῆς Ἀρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς Μουσικῆς» τοῦ Σόλωνα Μιχαηλίδου, ποὺ ἐκδόθηκε στὴν ἀγγλικὴ γλῶσσα ἀπὸ τὸν μεγάλον οἶκον τοῦ Λονδίνου Φέημπερ. Σὲ διάστημα μικρότερον τοῦ χρόνου ἢ πρώτη ἐκδοσὴ κοντείνει νὰ ἐξαντληθεῖ καὶ ἀντιμετωπίζεται ἤδη μίᾳ δευτέρῃ ἐκδόσει. — Μερικὰ ἀποσπάσματα ἀπὸ κριτικὰς ποὺ ἐνθουσιαστικὰ ὑποδέχτηκαν τὴν Ἑγκυκλοπαίδεια: Ὁ Σέρ Τόμας Ἀρμστρογκ, πρ. Διευθυντὴς τῆς Βασιλικῆς Μουσικῆς Ἀκαδημίας τοῦ Λονδίνου, ἐκφράζει «ἀπεριόριστον θαυμασμόν γιὰ τὸ μεγάλο αὐτὸ ἐπίτευγμα». Ὁ διαπρεπὴς Μουσικολόγος Μπῶ Μποβὺ τὸ χαρακτηρίζει στὴν ἐλβετικὴ Μουσικὴ Ἐπιθεώρησιν «ἓνα θαυμάσιον ὄργανον μελέτης ποὺ ὁ Σόλων Μιχαηλίδης ἔθεσε στὴν διάθεσιν τῶν ἐλληνιστῶν καὶ τῶν μουσικολόγων». Ὁ Οὐγγρος συνθέτης καὶ μουσικολόγος Σάντορ Βέρες, καθηγητὴς στὸ Πανεπιστήμιον τῆς Βέρνης γράφει: «Τὸ πολυτιμότερον αὐτὸ βιβλίον δὲν εἶναι μονάχα τὸ ἀποτέλεσμα μακροχρόνιας καὶ ἐξαιρετικῆς προσεκτικῆς ἐρευνας, ἀλλὰ ἤρθε νὰ πληρώσῃ ἓνα ἀπὸ

μακρὰ χρόνια αἰσθητὸ κενὸ στὴν ἐπιστημονικὴ ἐρευνα καὶ τὴν σύγχρονη μουσικολογία. Τὸ τεράστιον ποσὸν βαθειῶν γνώσεων ποὺ προσφέρει τὸ κάνει ἀναπόσπαστον βοήθημα γιὰ ὅλους ποὺ ἐνδιαφέρονται γιὰ τὴν μουσικὴ μας κληρονομίαν».

## W. S. GWYNN WILLIAMS: A TRIBUTE

by ARWEL HUGHES

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W. S. Gwynn Williams, or 'W.S.' as he was called by his friends, was one of the most remarkable Welshmen of his time. It would be impossible in a short article to do justice to such a man, who was not only a musician but also a publisher, lawyer, and a fine organizer. In fact this many-sided Welshman had already become almost a legend in his lifetime, but the various strands of this fascinating story will have to await the painstaking biographer who will be able to piece them together to produce a true picture of a very forceful personality. All I can do here is to fill in some details of a life which was unique in many ways, exerting an influence not only in Wales but also internationally through the Llangollen Eisteddfod.

Gwynn Williams was born in 1896 at Plas Hafod, Llangollen, a house in which he lived and worked throughout his life. His father, William Pencerdd Williams, a respected musician and conductor of the Llangollen Choral Society, was his first music teacher, giving him a thorough grounding in Tonic Solfa which was very popular in Wales at that time. He became such an expert in this notation that he was later awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Tonic Solfa College. His father, however, wanted him to study medicine, but agreed later that Law would be a more suitable vocation. He was articled for a time to a Wrexham firm of solicitors headed by the late Emyr Williams, and this legal training was to stand him in good stead later as a publisher of music. About the same time he also worked for the publishing firm of Hughes & Son, becoming the Editor of their magazine *Y Cerddor Newydd*, which became the mouthpiece of the progressive musicians of the twenties. The next step was natural and inevitable — the founding of his own publishing firm. The creation of the Gwynn Publishing Company was a momentous step and one which played an important part in his future development. That is why I shall have occasion to refer to it again in the course of this article.

Another landmark in Gwynn's career was his appointment as Honorary Secretary of the Welsh Folk Song Society in the early 30's.





Photo: Algernon Smith

This is what he had to say about this in 1958, the year which saw the commemoration of the founding of the Society: 'It has been one of the greatest privileges of my musical life that for just a quarter of a century I have been able to serve the W.F.S. as Hon. Secretary, in addition to being Editor for the past twelve years.' (Editor of the Folk Song Journals.) In 1957 he was elected Chairman in recognition of his great service to the Society, and also became President of the Folk Dance Society. In this connection it is well to note his great contribution to the literature of folk song and dance. His book *Welsh National Music and Dance* is an authoritative essay on the subject, showing his deep understanding of our folk traditions. It is said that Dr. J. Lloyd Williams was the G.O.M. of the Welsh Folk Song Movement. I would add that Gwynn Williams was the lifeline of the movement, preserving its great treasures for all time in several volumes published by the Gwynn Publishing Company.

But there was more to it than this. He had a passionate love for these newly-found old Welsh folk songs; not the usual Welsh airs which are of more recent origin, fashioned as they are on the major and minor scales, suggesting that they might even have been actually 'composed'. In contrast, the recently discovered folk songs were, according to Gwynn, the real spontaneous songs of the people, and, being modal in character, were much older, like those discovered in England by Cecil Sharp, Vaughan Williams and others. I remember meeting Gwynn for the very first time many years ago when I was a student at the Royal College, and even then he had this great vision of a Welsh national school of composers inspired by the folk song tradition as had happened in England. Unfortunately, this did not materialize mainly because the awareness of a folk tradition came to Wales rather later than in England, and in the meantime music itself had changed, composers becoming increasingly international in their outlook.

It is strange, however, how this 'folk' idea has again erupted in the popular music field. But as Emrys Cleaver, an intimate friend of W.S., told me the other day, Gwynn had nothing but contempt for these spurious outpourings which daily contaminate the Welsh 'air'.

He was granted many honours during his lifetime, but as Emrys Cleaver points out, the one he cherished most was the Fellowship of the National Eisteddfod Council. No wonder, for he had given uninterrupted service to the 'National' throughout his lifetime. As 'Gwynn o'r Llan' (his bardic title), he was Music Director for the



Gorsedd until his death and Chairman of the Eisteddfod Council's Music Committee for many years.

To many, however, his greatest memorial will be the International Eisteddfod. In order to do justice to his involvement in this unique undertaking, I have asked three of the senior adjudicators at this Eisteddfod to give me a short appreciation of the man with whom they worked for many years. They were delighted to do this, and later I shall be quoting extensively from their statements.

Although, as I have already shown, Gwynn had a deep and abiding love for his country's musical tradition, he never lost sight of the fact of music being a universal language. Sir Thomas Armstrong makes this point when he says:

'Gwynn Williams did a great deal for music, for music in Wales, and for Welsh music; and his influence was all the more helpful because he retained the sense of music as a world activity, in which Welsh music was one important element with its own individuality, but not isolated from the forces that affect the art as a whole.'

What better platform to expound this idea of music as a 'world activity' than the International?

As everyone knows, the first International Eisteddfod was held at Llangollen in 1947. This is not the place to recount the story of the Eisteddfod, for it has already been well documented in a brilliant essay entitled *The origin of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod* by J. N. Bowen, the present Chairman of the Executive, and appeared in a brochure commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Eisteddfod. Sufficient to say that the idea of an International Eisteddfod came from a North Wales journalist, Harold Tudor, who later became an official of the British Council. In 1946 he discussed the project with W. S. Gwynn Williams, who was most enthusiastic, and from then on it gradually developed until it is now considered to be the finest festival of its kind in Europe if not the world. This is certainly the view of Professor Solon Michaelides:

'Certainly nobody could imagine the present world fame of the Eisteddfod when it started in 1947. Its elevation to its present musical status as the first of its kind in the world was the result of Gwynn's untiring efforts; he was indeed its musical soul. Most of the Choral Festivals in Europe have been founded after the example of the International Eisteddfod.'

On the same theme here is Miss Lucile Armstrong, adjudicator in the dance section. After discussing Gwynn's 'feeling for others and sympathy towards men of all races which he translated into the musical expression of all peoples without barriers', she goes on to say:

'This musical expression Mr. Gwynn Williams achieved, after the Second World War, by bringing together millions of people in friendship and joy, to that beautiful mountain spot which is Llangollen; a spot that has set the fashion of international music and dance festivals in many parts of the world.'

It will be evident to most people by now that without Gwynn Williams the International Eisteddfod would not be what it is today, a sort of musical bridge, linking the many nations of the world. What sort of man was he? I have already referred to my first meeting with him when I was a student, and I well remember how difficult it was to communicate with him at first, but very soon we found some common ground, and then he would open up, expounding his beliefs in the future of Welsh music with a passionate sincerity. Lucile Armstrong seems to have had a similar experience on first encounter:

'When I first met Mr. Gwynn Williams he inspired me with a certain awe, probably because he was concise and his instructions short and to the point. Later I realized that beneath this formal exterior existed a profound understanding of the crying need for love and harmonious living that embraced all humanity.'

Even Prof. Michaelides found him equally reticent at first:

'I first met W. S. Gwynn Williams in 1948 in Basel at the first Conference of the International Folk Music Council. At first contact he looked rather restrained, but his simplicity of manner, his humanity, his sincerity and strong sense of humour opened easily the way to a more intimate and friendly atmosphere, and made his company extremely attractive and pleasant.'

I would hazard a guess that his reticence, or, more correctly, his very careful weighing up of what people had to say before committing himself, proved invaluable in solving the many difficult problems which arose at the outset in such a complicated exercise as the International Eisteddfod. I'm told that he said very little at a committee meeting, but when he did speak he knew exactly what direction to take, having thought things out very carefully beforehand.

It was this same attention to detail, coupled with an unexpected spirit of adventure in publishing, which were the main reasons for the success of the Gwynn Publishing Company. While the other Welsh firms were content in publishing popular pieces from the last century, Gwynn Williams launched out daringly by issuing his own editions and arrangements of the sixteenth-century choral classics, incorporating the original language with English and Welsh translations. In dealing with this aspect of Gwynn's work, Sir Thomas Armstrong had this to say:

‘His compositions and arrangements, his researches into the music of the past and folk music, his energy in making the results of his work available to all who could use them — all these efforts contributed to the artistic life of several decades in various countries. In Wales, especially, he did a great job to widen and enrich the choral repertory, and to improve the quality of music used in education.’

I have first hand knowledge of the effect which this policy of publishing only the best of European music had on Welsh choral activity. It is not uncommon these days to see such names as Palestrina, Byrd, Wilbye and many others of this period in recitals given by our Welsh mixed, male and female choirs. Of course, all this music was also available for inclusion as test-pieces in the Llangollen International Eisteddfod’s syllabus, which further heightened the value of such a policy. It is to be hoped that the Gwynn Publishing Company will be able to continue with the good work, even though Gwynn himself is no longer with us. Fortunately, his widow, Beti, has a sound knowledge of the intricate working of the company, having helped her husband for many years. Wales cannot afford to lose what is now its only music publishing company, and I hope the present owner will have the strength, with the help of us all who cherish the memory of Gwynn Williams, to carry on providing the world with all that is good in the art of music.

I end this short tribute with Gwynn’s own words which really sum up his devotion not only to the Llangollen International Eisteddfod, but also to the art of music itself: ‘*We must keep the standards high.*’