

Braids of Song

Gwead y Gân

by

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Er cof am fy nhad,
Y Parchedig E D Morgan

a ddiogelodd drysor.

In memory of my father,
the Reverend E D Morgan

who preserved a treasure.

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Abstract

The desire to recognise the richness, humanity, and cross fertilisation of cultures and identities that built today's America is the starting point for *Braids of Song*. Its overarching concerns trace the interrelation between immigration, identity and creativity within a Welsh Trans-Atlantic context.

Braids of Song is a mixed-genre collection of stories that acknowledges the preciousness of culture; in particular, the music, which is both able to cross different linguistic boundaries and to breach those between melody and language itself. The stories are shared through four intertwined narrative strands in a mixture of literary styles, ranging from creative non-fiction essays and poems to dramatic monologues. The bequest of a handwritten opera manuscript begins the journey, and three musicians from the past each speak in dramatic monologue: Dr Joseph Parry, Dr Daniel Protheroe, and Marie Novello. The fourth narrative is my own in *ysgrif* (essay/composition): a medley of reflections and observations in a Welsh-American context. The collection is linked by poems, both found and original, carrying one story to the next and uniting the mixed-genre collection of *Braids of Song*.

The critical commentary debate takes the form of an exploration that may be called, 'Braided Identities': identities woven from inherited 'songs' that have crossed the Atlantic to America and back again to Wales. The commentary, itself a story, attempts to articulate, analyse and reveal how creative components are enhanced by their cultural and geographical contexts.

Keywords: Immigration, identity, creativity, Welsh-American, song.

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Introduction:

Braids of Song is a musical celebration of life in stories. Each *stori sydyn* (quick story) begins with *Arianwen*. Every song has its story, and each story has its song, with the voice of the singer or singers, being the storyteller. They all reveal their tales, both real and imagined, with details interweaving between times and overlapping in a blend of genres and styles showing what it is to be a Welsh immigrant with a creative soul in the vast land of opportunity that is America.

The form is reminiscent of a grand concert with guest artists, a chorus, and an emcee who keeps the flow moving. The programme includes a mixture of classic *oldies* as well as new material. Blending identities, braiding cultures, and weaving songs are the themes of our concert in words, showing how immigration to a new country can alter a person, how the challenges and opportunities of the new are balanced with a sense of loss for the old, and how the creative output is affected in the process of assimilating to a new culture.

Braids of Song

By Braids of Song

One river, many voices,
in unclouded clarity.

Over smooth pebbles, through
pooled stones, the streaming sighs
of Alpine seat,
in majesty overflows.

Eyotic castles skirted by streams
of ceaseless melodies
blended as one, to waves of euphony.

Rippled tides of dreams,
spirits on shamanic motion ways
to new worlds, crossed unseen.

Breath inhaled in purity,
deep stillness of life flowing.
All is well, in the shapeshifting
songs of home.

Arianwen, Picturesque Opera at Pontyates

[A conversation between my father and me with his voice telling the story.]

Did I ever tell you about the time that I conducted an opera?

Had he ever! We'd heard about it for years, but truthfully, we didn't really listen. It was just Dad going on about one of the many things that he'd done during his life.

'I've found your baton, Dad. It's a bit wonky though!'

Wel, ti'n gweld...I bought it over sixty years ago. I sent away for it by mail order after I'd saved up enough to buy it. I needed a long baton to conduct the orchestra as well as the ensemble. Everybody needed to be able to see my white stick wherever they were on the stage, or in the pit. Wedi'r cwbl, I was the one keeping it all together.

Oh, how I knew how that felt. Wasn't I doing exactly that right now? And had I not experienced similar challenges as a conductor of Côr Cymry Gogledd America?

Arianwen, that's what the opera was called. I've still got the score somewhere.

Somewhere, indeed! He knew exactly where he'd put it for safekeeping, but he wasn't telling. Even now. He knew where to find any book amid his mountainous piles of books.

Cofia nawr, there are treasures in this house.

That was the response I'd get every time I'd try to move his books or do some rearranging. His memory and observation were as sharp as ever, and his sense of order never diminished. Every time I tried to move his stacks, Dad noticed. He didn't want his treasures moved. As his illness advanced, the more I had to move.

As his story rolled on, his voice became impassioned and his mannerisms animated, as we always returned to Arianwen...

The entire village was involved in the production. There'd never been anything like it in Pontyates – nor has there been since. There were four performances of *Arianwen*

at the Welfare Hall, and we were sold out, every night. We were the Pontyates Operatic Society – I gave it the title. You’ve got to have something to live up to in life. Aim for the moon, is what I always say – otherwise, what’s the point?

Mr Snell was his name, the owner of the publishing firm in Swansea, though he liked being known as ‘Mr Music’. I’d seen his advertisement in the Carmarthen Journal, so I’d made an appointment to go and see him. I’d written him a letter, and he’d replied telling me that it was indeed convenient for me to come visit him at his office but warned me that things were not as they once had been. And he was right.

I’d set aside the whole day to go visit him. The travelling would take a bit of time, but I didn’t want to be rushed once I got there. I had to make the right selection; there was a lot riding on it. It took all day, but that visit changed my life.

From Pontyets, I took the Gwendraeth Valley Line train down through Carway, Glyn Abbey and Trimsaran to Burry Port, where I changed for the ‘main line’ from Carmarthen to London, changing again at Swansea, where I got off. Then I walked the rest of the way to the three-storey building. My appointment was for eleven o’clock - I made it with five minutes to spare.

He was an older gentleman, even then, dressed in a white fly-collar shirt with a black three-piece suit, tie, waistcoat, and pinstripe trousers. He was quite a bit taller than me, though he stooped a little with age. His white hair and goatee beard made him seem very noble. He had a gold watch hanging from his waistcoat button, and he made a great show of pulling the dial out of his pocket to consult the time, as I opened the door into his world. I was on time.

“*Dewch mewn*, do come in, Mr Morgan!” he said in a very measured and cultured voice, and I followed him into the inner sanctum of the shop. His office contained a large oak desk piled high with manuscripts behind which he sat in an oversized chair. I took the chair offered which was quite a bit lower than the one he sat on. We got right down to business.

“I’ve been giving your letter some thought,” he said, “and I think there should be something suitable for you on the third floor. That’s where we keep the original

scores and the archive materials. As you know, our firm, D. J. Snell & Sons, is the world's largest publisher of music by Welsh writers – worldwide, mind you. So, we've got plenty of material for you to review, but I'd suggest you start your search with the *Doctor Mawr* himself, Joseph Parry."

Now we were getting to it.

"There's the cantata, *Ymgom yr Adar*, a nice piece for children and young people – lots of tips about life, and all that - but I'm guessing that you need something a bit more substantial for your opera company."

I certainly did, I told him. I had a village to cast! So, Mr Snell carried on.

"Dr Parry wrote about six or eight operas but we, that is Snell & Co, hold the rights to three: *Blodwen*, *Arianwen* and *Sylvia*. Fine works, but I'd recommend that you look at *Arianwen*."

He had a big ledger in front of him, and as he turned page after page, he ran his finger down the entries...

"From our records, I can tell you that we've never published the entire opera, though we did put out a *solfa* version of the choruses alone back in 1933. If you should take on this opera, you'll be the only one, other than Dr Parry himself and his son to have done a complete performance of *Arianwen*. That would be a *feather in the cap* of the Pontyates Operatic Society!"

This was more like it, I thought to myself. Something special!

"I didn't really know *y Doctor Mawr* ... I established the firm in 1900... I bought the rights to his entire collection of music from his wife, Jane... nice lady, an American... I bought the rights not long after Dr Parry died back in 1903. Mrs Parry needed the money, and we paid royalties."

He was getting to the business of music now!

“The original manuscripts, in Dr Parry’s own hand, are upstairs. As I recall, he was very particular in the stage directions that he wrote. Mrs Parry did tell me that *Arianwen* was one of her husband’s favourite works. He wrote it while he was living here in Swansea, perhaps it was where he got the ideas for the fishermen and the coastal scenes? Anyway, Mrs Parry said that he was never happier than when he was on the podium, with a long wooden baton in his hand, conducting *Arianwen*.”

I’ll need a new baton, I thought. Can’t conduct a major opera with a pencil.

“I’ll take you up to the third floor and you can review it all at your leisure... I’m sorry to say that things are a bit disorganised up there now. The building had a good ‘shake up’ during the blitz and we’re not back on top of things. Terrible times, but we made it through. I kept telling the family that the Luftwaffe wouldn’t bomb our store... all our pianos are German. Anyway, we’ll talk terms when you know what you’d like. We’ll come to a good arrangement for you.”

You see, I had to climb the wooden stairs to the third floor and once I’d cleared a space... Mr Snell was right, it was topsy-turvy up there... I started reading through the scores. There were thousands of them. Luckily, Mr Snell had given me a clue as to where to start – at the beginning of the alphabet – with *Arianwen*. A lovely name, don’t you think? That’s what I thought.

Arianwen, as I discovered, is the tale of a beautiful fisherman’s daughter who falls in love with Walter, a poor fisherman, but she is promised by her father to another of greater means. When all seems lost, Beggi Wyllt, a witch, saves the day by revealing a long-held dark secret, and *Arianwen* finally ends up with her ‘prince’, as Walter is really Sir Robert Fychan. That was the one! Snell was right. The combination of an opera with English words blended with Welsh folk melodies and the Joseph Parry panache made *Arianwen* the perfect find. I was thrilled.

Ti’n gweld, I spent the rest of the day going through the scores, just in case, but I just knew that *Arianwen* was the right one... And so, before the ‘close of business’ that day, Mr Snell and I agreed on the terms. I took home with me Dr Parry’s own

score of *Arianwen* with arrangements made for a shipment of libretto only scripts, *solfa* chorus scores, string orchestra parts, and arias and duets specially copied for the main roles. Payment would be due after the first performance run in June. Ah well...

And so, I got to work, not that I really knew what I was doing, mind you, but I had the books to help me. I've still got most of them here in the house...see up on the shelf... volumes on conducting a choir and an orchestra, stage direction, how to apply make-up, theatrical analysis, building sets, etcetera. But the most important part was clear leadership! Mind you, they were all older than I was, except for the children, but it didn't matter. Remember, that however you present yourself, that's what you'll get back. If you're nervous, the 'company' will be nervous. If you show that you're unsure, then your 'company' will also be unsure.

Not really listening, I nodded and agreed.

And I'll tell you why I chose *Arianwen*... so that there would be something for everyone who wanted to take part... principal and secondary roles, crowd scenes and lots of things that needed doing backstage. The music was interesting without being overly difficult. *Cofia*, there were some familiar Welsh folk songs in it...*Ar hyd y nos*, *Hob y Deri Dando*, *Morfa Rhuddlan*, *Codiad yr Ehedydd*...you know the tunes, and that helped everyone, including me.

You could say, it was a story about a village, for a village.

Islwyn built the sets and made them look like a village scene. The 'Band of Hope' choir sang the ensemble parts – the villagers, robbers, witches and 'invisibles' in the opera. The chapel organist, Mrs Walters LRAM, LRCM, played the piano for the rehearsals, and I was a stickler then. Oh, I'd let them have it if they were late for rehearsal or hadn't learned their parts. Nora the hairdresser, helped with the stage make-up – there's the book on make-up... somewhere...ah, where?

We had the auditions in the chapel vestry, though I already knew who'd be able to sing the main roles. I had their voices in mind when I chose the opera.

Well, the main tenor role of ‘Walter Mostyn’ went to Len Jones...a beautiful, lyric tenor voice. He was a semi-professional really. He worked in the colliery but every summer he’d get a special leave of absence to go and sing with the new Glyndebourne Festival Opera Company in Sussex. He sang with all the big names of the day – he even met Benjamin Britten. The funny thing was that he always came home to Pontiets, and a good thing it was too – every time he went away, his little girl, Dilys, would miss him so much that her eyes would twitch until he came home. Then they stopped twitching.

Len was a marvellous ‘Walter Mostyn’ such a natural hero, understated too...and opposite him, I cast Mary Evans Thomas as ‘Arianwen’, a spectacular soprano. Her high notes just soared effortlessly up to the rafters.

And then I had Don Jones as Arianwen’s father, ‘Twm Shon Twm’. *Ti’n cofio fe?* He had a dramatic bass voice. He was only a slip of a man, but that voice could boom all the way around Pontiets Hall, even with the orchestra... His son was a rotter... he ruined my bicycle... *y diawl bach*...and I hadn’t even finished paying for it. He was their ‘little prince’, so that was that, and so I had to walk everywhere... Don had a horrible death – pneumoconiosis, he needed oxygen tanks to breathe and his veins were blue-black with dust, but at the time of *Arianwen* he was a ‘vocal star’ throughout the valley!

Your mother wasn’t in the opera. We were courting then, but she was away in Birmingham on her first teaching job after college. They wanted young teachers from Wales then. Oh, I missed her ... we’d been courting for three years, but I was busy with my ministerial duties, and the opera filled in all the other time. We didn’t have phones then, so she’d call me from a phone box once a week, on Monday nights, while I was down in the hall rehearsing!

It’s a love story, you know. *Arianwen*.

Then my father giggled, and the story ended as he slipped off to sleep.

While Dad slept, I took his ‘quick read books’ back to the town library and picked out his next stash and checked out the special order I’d requested for myself. It was a book called ‘Being Mortal’ by American-Indian surgeon, Atul Gawande, about palliative care and how to help make a person’s ‘end of days’ as dignified and meaningful as possible. It was a bestseller and the bits I read were a help. I hid it under my pillow to read during the quiet times. Ha! I didn’t have quiet times, Dad kept me busy, living.

Hello!

Dad had enjoyed his life and was making the most of every bit that was left, particularly having his family around to help him. He knew that if he simply said the magic word, one of us would come running.

Hello!

The bellow from upstairs.

If there’s any chance of a mug of Horlicks, I’ll tell you more about *Arianwen*!

There was dancing in the show too – despite what they say about the Welsh, not everyone can sing. Mind you, I can sing but I can’t dance – so I recruited the ballet teacher, Miss Walters to do the choreography. Those ‘village folks’ never strolled and waltzed so well in all their lives!

I had to bring in all my connections. Luckily, I’d played violin back in school and in Brynamman ... just the place for a young lad. There’s nowhere quite like it, even now!

Well, we booked the Brynamman string orchestra to play *Arianwen* with us. Mary Williams was the orchestra leader – she’d taught me the violin, so we understood one-another. I’d rented the orchestra parts from Snell, but Mary added the extra instruments that we needed. We honestly couldn’t have fitted any more into the orchestra pit that we’d built at the Welfare Hall.

In exchange for the Brynamman crew coming to Pontiets to do the show we all went to Brynamman to give one performance on the Friday night of that week. It

was another sold out crowd. Mr Snell's recommendation worked. It was a momentous occasion talked about not only in the village but in the Gwendraeth Valley as well for years afterwards.

Later Mr Snell told me to keep Dr Parry's score of *Arianwen*. It was a gift, he said. The time had come for him to sell the firm that he'd established. He even offered the entire Snell inventory to me. I remember his saying, in that noble voice of his,

“Would you like to take it over? You seem like a very capable fellow – you certainly know your audience, and you've got the passion for this line of business.”

To think of a fully staged production of *Arianwen*, and I was the Musical Director – not bad, eh, for a twenty-something-year-old minister fresh out of college in his first ministry.

You know, Dr Joseph Parry in his time, staged *Arianwen* around Wales during the 1880s and 1890s, and even took a concert version on tour across America in 1899. They gave performances across eleven states in just under two months, travelling everywhere by train. There's even tell that the performance in Danville, Pennsylvania - his hometown in America - was recorded by Thomas Edison himself. I'm positive that they didn't sing it any better than my singers did...and the Band of Hope had never been so strong. I wasn't paid anything extra for the show, but *Noddfa* chapel bought a new piano with the takings of the Pontyates Operatic Society. Now there's another story for you...*

* see Appendix A.

There are treasures in this house

A bequest is a very special gift.

A deliberate decision by the donor,
and a gift to be treasured by the recipient.

The bequest can be a tangible piece of property or asset,
or alternatively, an item of indeterminable value
that when passed to the right person
becomes a priceless treasure.

It is the ultimate gift.

The last gift.

Singing Through the Pain

Mi glywaf dyner lais

Yn galw arnaf fi.

I hear a gentle voice calling me.

Gwylad: a ritual of watching with a loved-one for the passing of life from this world to another place. Even in knowing that it is due at any minute, we are not truly prepared for its arrival or its effect on us. With *gwylad*, the vigil kept by the living ends with the passing of life.

It is a solemn privilege to listen to, and hear, the sound of death, the letting go of the very last breath of life as it releases its way back to simple air. It is a song that swirls and spins an exquisite but excruciating melody. The enchanted tones thrust a blend of tonalities between colours of stormy darkness and intense light. As a vigil ends the song of grief flows forth in that moment, hinting at a resolution, but with no sign of touching the bottom, honouring and celebrating the life lost, while in anguish for the loss, and in thrashing waves of rudderless dissonance.

The loss of my first parent was a song alternating between blends of shallow gasps, wringing tears, fearful anger and grateful thanks.

My father had loved his life. He had a good family home, but he was always fascinated by the lives of others around him. As a minister, he was a ‘shepherd’ in all ways: a deep and expansive thinker and an avid reader of books, as diverse as held in any collection. Books took him to worlds that he would try to recreate for others in order to help make sense of the sometimes-chaotic nature of life.

After what was to be my father’s last surgery, he lost his concentration and drifted in his own thoughts. ‘Get him to read,’ was an instruction to me from a cousin and an authority in oncology. And so, I turned to what is one of my hometown’s greatest treasures, the municipal library. There I found the key, in stories. Most favoured were short tales telling of sport personalities, both young and old from home and abroad: *Stori sydyn*, a quick story, each written by an experienced writer on behalf of individual athletes. My small canvas bag filled with small books journeyed back and forth between Llanelli library and my father, breathing life back into his spirit. His interactions with us became animated once again, helped by his passion for sport.

The small bedroom became a screening room as my father's illness advanced, and in his final months we travelled the world watching together: championship rugby in New Zealand, tennis in Melbourne, snooker in Berlin, cricket in Sri Lanka, football in Brazil, darts in England - around we went. He knew all the players: unbeknownst to me he had followed their form and *stats* all his life. *Sky Go* was a godsend. When days were difficult, simply saying 'Andy Murray is playing in the final now!' brought him out of bed with *O bachgen!* These were simple, shared times that I will always hold close. Stories of others brought the joy of re-discovery and holistic healing to my father's soul as he grappled with his mortality.

Later, in my own way, I turned in a similar direction to the stories of his treasured books for comfort and resilience.

Cofia nawr, ma' 'na drysorau yn y tŷ 'ma! he liked to tell me. There are treasures in this house, don't forget now! It was to one of his most beloved possessions that I looked for a sense of connection: an old thick handwritten manuscript – not a mighty literary text of theological insight but a score filled with songs. They were Welsh folk songs twinned with a fictitious tale of *y werin bobol*, the ordinary folk woven together in the form of a grand opera. *Arianwen* is both the title of the opera and the heroine of the story. The score dates from the late 1880s and was penned by the great Welsh composer, Dr Joseph Parry.

Arianwen had been more than a 'first edition' for my father, it represented a memory of one of the highlights of his life. He staged the opera in 1953 in a west Wales village that had little to offer its residents, especially its young people and children, in terms of culture and community activity. *Arianwen* had given him the vehicle to draw a community together in a combined venture of professional quality: a staged theatrical performance, full orchestra, make-up, lights and a commemorative programme. My father was the facilitator-in-chief as director and conductor of the show, and the enabler of a lasting memory for all. This remains the only time that *Arianwen* was staged after the death of Joseph Parry in 1903.*

Although my father loved to travel to new places and meet new people, home was always Wales. He passed away on a beautiful Sunday evening, when chapel service was due to begin. Fittingly, that day was March 1st, St. David's Day, honouring the patron saint of Wales, and now for me, my father as well.

* As a Welsh-American, I have been excited to discover that the opera was on tour in concert version in the USA, with Joseph Parry and his ensemble, in 1899.

A significant memory of his final weeks was his question, 'What are you?' A singer, conductor, writer, traveller, and a Welsh woman who immigrated to America, were some of the obvious answers. Others, less apparent, were more difficult to answer at the time.

'When are you going to write about my box?' My father had asked, the special times of his life.

Arianwen in America

Monologue in three acts

(and postlude)

Fall 1899

[Overture: an introduction to something more substantial, the beginning of an opera.]

Personal Paragraph:

(Found poem, from a newspaper account)

JOSEPH PARRY
is the only man living
who has written Welsh opera,
and that this is the first opportunity
the Western world has ever had
to hear Welsh opera,
CO-OPERATE
to ensure for him
a hearty welcome among
his fellow countrymen
in the STATES.

The Danville Morning News

July 21, 1899

Act I: Opening Night in Danville

[The scene opens by the side of the stage of The Opera House in Danville, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. An interview between a gentleman of the press and the Maestro himself, Dr Joseph Parry.]

‘Let me tell you, my dear fellow, without egotism, mind, that this is the most important musical visit ever made to America from Wales.’

Why’s that? It’s Welsh Opera, of course... and Welsh Opera’s my creation.

Am I a pioneer?... do believe I am...I had a hunch that the time was right for such a theatrical endeavour, and I am proven correct. There’s been a great reception to my operas in Wales, and in England, and now, my ‘Arianwen’...a romantic opera ...makes its American debut here in Danville, Pennsylvania.

And tonight’s the Opening Night!

What’s an opera?

Hmm...you’re the first to ask that of me...Let me put it this way – it’s a grand spectacle! ...that’s what I wanted for Welsh music - a fresh new spectacle!

Blodwen was my first opera, but *Arianwen* is my favourite.

What am I talking about?

Some of your readers will know that the word ‘opera’ comes from the Italian for a piece. It’s drama on a grand scale... but it’s really just telling stories with music...and we Welsh do that so well!

See here... there’s the orchestra in the pit...maybe you are not accustomed to hearing one, you certainly will not have heard one of this quality... they’ve come from Scranton...the only one in this area...Scranton Symphony Orchestra...forty pieces... ...my principal singers, all from Wales, will take the main roles – they’ll sing and act their arias, duets, quartets. Then there’s the chorus: now that’s a very special part of the opera...the chorus draws the audience and the stage closer together... the

emotional link – there’s nothing like a good rousing chorus! *Eh?* Tonight, it’ll be sung by a chorus from Danville ... in *Arianwen*, I call them the *invisibles*. Not that they’re not seen, it’s just that they don’t have specific names – they are a group. An ensemble.

What do I want to achieve? I thought you’d ask me that question.

Tonight’s performance will make the production a community experience – the audience, the players in the pit, the singers on the stage – we’re drawn into the story. A Welsh story – and I’ll be conducting it all...brought with me, from Wales, singers of the first order to sing the major roles, they are my ‘Dr Parry Opera Company’... Miss Hannah Jones, one of the principal contraltos of Great Britain...she’s appeared with Madame Patti in several of her London concerts, ... and Maldwyn Humphreys, *the* noted tenor... he ranks next to Ben Davies ... ‘Arianwen’ herself will be sung by the soprano Madame Ashworth Hughes...a prize soprano at the Royal Academy ... and Madoc James as basso... and the rest of the troupe is also prominent in the musical world.

And there’s myself, of course... the creator of ‘Arianwen’ ... when mentioned that I’ll be conducting... my wife Jane says... I’m never happier than when I’m at the podium.

Incidentally, I’ll be using this baton...and a fine baton it is...it’s made of oak... presented to me here in Danville before I left, back in ’74 ...left to take up my role as the first Professor of Music at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth. ... *How’s that?...* ABERYSTWYTH... ...Aberystwyth - have you been there? It’s on the west coast. You should go –

What? My baton?

Oh, it’s a wondrous wand, it’s been with me everywhere...I’ve got others, but this one’s my favourite. I can hear the music as I conduct...my wife complains that I conduct in my sleep – arms going everywhere...I’ve even got one in the outhouse ... yes, like the great ministers, I practice in private...eh...no need to put that in the paper, eh!

Look, tell your readers, that, the thing is, opera is about people and their stories. All the emotions and themes that I, as a composer, love to write on – love,

loss, relationships, friendship, and difficult times. It's about how we all live together, but in costume with dancing and scenery...and lots of singing...and a big dramatic sound with words - in the libretto.

I'll tell you one of my favourite parts – one of the arias to listen out for at the end of the first act is when Walter sings a love song to Arianwen...

Arianwen fair, would that I were
A thrush on yonder tree,
My early lay at break of day
I'd sing to waken thee;

Your readers are going to love it, I know.

Words are so important...in opera terms, they're called the libretto. I like to write my own, with some help...of course...Actually, did you know that Mozart's librettist lived near here? Just for a while. Now *he* could write a libretto...I've used a few of his tricks in Arianwen...not all is what it seems...you'll see.

What's that? Lorenzo DA PONTE

The one who wrote the libretti for 'The Marriage of Figaro', 'Don Giovanni' and 'Cosi fan tutti'. In Sunbury...he lived, yes, on the east bank of the Susquehanna river, just a few miles downstream from Danville, below the confluence of the two branches that's the one, Sunbury the county seat of Northumberland.

Lorenzo Da Ponte was his name...fascinating fellow. From Venice, Italy but he died in New York in 1838, aged 89.... lived a colourful life... inspired so much ground-breaking music.... saw the premiere tour of 'The Marriage of Figaro' in Philadelphia – on a Tuesday night - with the Metropolitan Opera Company from New York...in '94...I remember the year well. That was the year that...hmm...well, I was here for three months after my son...hmm [Dr P distracted in his thoughts...]

What was I saying? Oh yes, Naturalized American citizen he was ...Da Ponte... age 79. I'm an American citizen.... yes, and a British citizen. Did you know that he was Jewish...da Ponte, of course, he converted to the Roman Catholic church as a child,

so that his widowed father could marry a lady of the Catholic faith...imagine! He was good at disguises – he writes them in his operas...got some in *Arianwen*...you don't know who's who...until it's revealed. Clever, eh?

Well, look, you asked me why Welsh Opera?

Why not? Da Ponte had his own opera company in New York to do Italian Opera so.... and on my last trip here I saw the great Maestro Walter Damrosch conduct the German Metropolitan Opera in Philadelphia. ... the Grand Operas of the Masters... *Pam lai*, I thought to myself. Philadelphia, that's where I first saw ... well, where I heard them too...in German, Italian and French – and later again in the theatres of London. Those shows in Philadelphia inspired me though ... and I thought to myself...why not create opera for Wales... it's such a magical place...and you're always near the sea or a mountain... so using the Welsh language...many would say that it's the language of heaven!

Pam lai! Why not? then! Or, as they say in Italian, *Perché no!*

In a Welsh fishing village...that's where it's set ... take the opera to the great stages of the world...for Welsh people everywhere...here in America, too...got some scores ready to be printed, mostly the chorus parts, for sale...*Y Werin*, yes. The chorus parts of 'Arianwen' – the villagers, robbers, witches and invisibles - will be sung tonight, at my invitation, by the Welsh Choir of Danville. They are a magnificent chorus of fifty voices.... mixed, of course.... men and women. I started the choir years ago but now my brother-in-law, Gomer Thomas, is the conductor. They are in fine voice but there's much to be done before tonight's opening... costumes, scenery, make-up, props, lights... yes, there's electricity here in this theatre.

Of course, you'll want to know why start with Danville?

Oh, my dear fellow, The Danville Opera House is a major performance venue... I remember it being opened back in '72 ... before I moved to Wales...and I thought even then, that someday I'd have a major work of mine performed here...Why? ... it's Grand Opera ... and there's seating for over one thousand four hundred people and we're expecting a full house...we're banking on it (...lost a lot of money, I did, on my other opera, *Blodwen* in Wales). There's a special train coming down from

Scranton – it'll stop at all the Welsh 'stops' down the Wyoming Valley – there are lots of them ... you see, this is the only stage between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh that can accommodate the size of production that I've created.

And it's such a beautiful space...luxurious even...with the upholstered, folding opera chairs, the magnificent electric chandelier to match the grand opera, ... The stage itself allows for large scenery specially built, the electric lighting – not just gas, - then there's the orchestra pit for my full orchestra... flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, horns in C, tenor trombone, strings and of course, the *timps*. There'll be ventilation, and theatre seats for the audience, andmy podium...my baton will be clearly seen....

I did mention that I am the musical director, did I? The Conductor?

You ask about Home?

Yes, it's coming home, isn't it...? Danville...at least, my second home...we emigrated from Wales when I was just 13...but more importantly to me, it's where I got started as a musician ... a serious musician, that is. ... there was music all around me in Wales, ... but I got the formal musical education – harmony, counterpoint, theory - here in Danville with John Abel Jones and John M. Price – we worked together at the 'Rough and Ready' - and there was Gomer Thomas – all gave me the learning and tools... the foundation for my great success. And to top it...my people are here! Without them I wouldn't be *Y Doctor Mawr* in Wales, and *Pencerdd America*.

You ask, what does all that mean?

I'm the 'Great Doctor' – of music, of course, from Cambridge University ... and *Pencerdd America* - 'America's Master Musician' – or as I like to say, 'America's Chief of Song'. It's so much more noble, don't you think? – after all, back in the times of the Princes...the Welsh Princes... the '*Pencerdd*' was the Prince's musician ...he had a seat at the royal table. Not just 'background' minstrels.

Look, I'm a professor of music...so I'm always teaching...let me tell you...it's not happenstance...there's inspiration, but the craft has to be mastered by study and by experience. I'm always writing. What good are great tunes in your head if you

haven't the tools to write them down, or know how a voice 'sings', or how words and syllables can align in melody...what makes them mellifluous... the harmony of words and music.... divine...and ultimately maybe, the key to my success is to know what audiences like...I know my audiences very well...

By the way...I'm sure your readers would like to know that my new collection 'Cambrian *Minstrelsie* (Alawon Gwalia) – A National Collection of Welsh Songs' is out now...dedicated it to her majesty Queen Victoria, and the words are all in Welsh edited by Dewi Môn - he's such a fine poet, preacher...Rev. David Rowlands...is his real name...and he's a teacher.... he can write and move words around in English and Welsh...he worked on the words for *Arianwen* also.... English for *Arianwen*....to get a wider audience...oh 'Cambrian *Minstrelsie*... songs are with my own accompaniment... A very handsome set it is too... six leather bound volumes published in time for Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee (1897) – a landmark collection for Welsh music...It's selling well...Gomer Thomas is selling them in his shop...

How do I like being near the Susquehanna?

Oh, it's so grand to be back again on the banks of the mighty Susquehanna.... and with such sound musicians...we sailed here on the *Lucania* - the 'Dr Parry Opera Company' - from Wales on board the Cunard's liner...the crew had me form a choir of the passengers...I taught them to sing in parts...SATB...Soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Then when we docked, we stayed the night in the Celtic Hotel – Eleazar Jones' place - and travelled straight away from New York to Danville on the train.

Danville...home of the Ironmen ... Did I tell you that I worked at the 'Rough and Ready' - the iron mill here ... as a boy... well, young man. ... head roller by the end. The iron that we rolled made the T-rails for the new railroads...and the cannon balls...

Ah yes, for the Civil War. Yes, I was here then...before your time? A terrible time... everyone struggled...I did too but in a different way, maybe. 'Lofty ideals' that's what some of my family thought I had when it all began...that I was a coward...no I didn't serve... couldn't kill ...split the family... my devotion to music and to my God is absolute... I tried, though... tried in my own way to support the effort.... Essential labour, I was...and I wrote songs...my contribution ... take a look at 'The American Star' – it's got a companion version as *Baner ein gwlad*. Gomer's selling that one too... it's got a fine-looking cover...

I wondered if you'd ask if I was an objector?

Well, I guess I was...it wasn't the way I was raised, to kill...but I'd have been a real liability on the battlefield! No, much better I stayed home at the works, with my music...Those *Ts* we made at the Rough and Ready. Made a big difference...to the effort...they connected the tracks for the different train companies...connecting the tracks – you could say that without the *Ts* there'd be no way of going across this country by train ...Transcontinental Railway...I use it, frequently...

Where next? Oh, I'm glad you asked -

From Danville, we've booked engagements among the *Cymric* communities across the country... a seven weeks tour, every night ... being full. We'll go out West over three thousand miles to Colorado and Utah...and we have some important fixtures among the Mormons...and perform in some of the most important cities in the States, and wind up back in New York again, the last night a Grand Finale, before our return to Wales.

The Mormons, yes...to Utah...*plant y Saint*...the Saint's children...they called them...they've invited me out often... to adjudicate, conduct *cymanfaoedd canu*, and to perform. Some of the members of Bethesda chapel, Merthyr are out there now. They're fine people.

How can I do so much you ask?

... temperament. ... I have much that I want to accomplish. In music, I'd say that I live at a high tension, and I'm certain that the time is ripe for the establishment of a school of Welsh opera...had a bit of a rough patch a few years ago...lost my second son...

Diolch, thank you for saying that. Hm...

...since then I'm in an even bigger hurry to do all the things that I need to get done. ... much music to write and share. ...After all, it could all end in an instant...I'm better now...

‘A reason for each day...someone you love... a purpose for your work far greater than you,’ that’s what they told me. The routine of giving concerts and performing in general, the warm and instant reaction of the audiences, with the discipline of hard work. Well, I wasn’t healed but I could ‘go on’ and create music.

And always, always at my side is my Jane...she was brought up in Danville... ‘Take my love for granted,’ she’d say, ‘but never me.’ And I never have...my devotion to her is absolute.

Tenor... that’s what I sang as a young man...light baritone, sometimes...sang in the Danville Glee choirs...baritone voice, very useful ... moving between the parts. Abel Jones was the conductor...taught me harmony and composition and I sang in the choir... That’s when I realized people just want a really good tune. ... from the depths of my Welsh soul. Sentimental, some might say... I am....and I’ve got a Doctorate from Cambridge...did you put that in? The first from Wales...not an honorary one mind...earned.

Pull at the heartstrings... pure melody with words singing their own song...a glorious blend... key to my success, really...don’t like to limit myself or be restrained by convention or any establishment...fellow musician and man of the print newspaper once said that I’m, and I quote, ‘a man of many parts and many moods’.

Absolutely Correct!

... a poor boy from Merthyr ...musically illiterate ... who came to Danville without advantages, musical or otherwise ...and by sheer hard work and persistent application to an ideal, I’ve scaled the ladder of success to become the most famous Welsh musician known to the Welsh people both in America and Wales. ...even if I do say so myself!

Not many can do it alone. I did have some help ...family, community, and the Almighty.

Ah, Arianwen, of course...

Arianwen has made it big in Wales in the last years and this, as I’ve already mentioned, is the start of a major operatic and concert tour of the *Cymric* communities across eleven states in America. On the cusp of the new millennium, Welsh Opera is making its debut outside of Wales – its world debut.

My previous opera, *Blodwen*, lost me a lot of money ...as can happen ...

How's that? Oh, well I had to finance the performances myself...in Welsh only...limited audience, so with *Arianwen*, I've done things a little differently ... used the combination of Welsh opera to English words blended together with Welsh folk melodies and my own, as I like to call it - the Joseph Parry *élan* makes *Arianwen* the perfect mix.

Let me spell it for you – A R I A N W E N.

A beautiful name, don't you think? White silver, or silver white, that's how it translates.

Yes, it's a happy-ever-after story, a romance with a Welsh twist. ...Arianwen, a beautiful fisherman's daughter, falls in love with Walter Mostyn, a poor fisherman, but is promised, by her father, Twm Shon Twm, to another of greater means – Morgan Jones.

Are you with me so far?

When all seems lost, Beggi Wyllt, a good witch, saves the day by revealing a long-held dark secret, and Arianwen finally ends up with her 'prince', as Walter Mostyn is really Sir Robert Fychan. ... a romance to make your heart beat happier.

Easy to understand... that's the beauty of it ... conceived of it myself, first in Welsh, and then in English, with the help of Dewi Môn. ...

Who is Dewi? My librettist, of course.

Dewi is his bardic name...David Rowlands...the Reverend David Rowlands...he's a fine fellow. A minister, scholar, poet and teacher, lives in Brecon...we've worked together on a lot of words.... met him in Aberystwyth.

Here's a poster of *Arianwen*'s Welsh debut... Theatre Royal in '84... 'A week of national Welsh Opera' ... *Arianwen* played for three nights, and *Blodwen* for three nights...full orchestra - conducted by me, the composer.

Where? Oh, in Cardiff... one of the most important port cities in the world ... millions of tons of coal shipped to the four corners... a magnificent Triennial Music Festival ...

... there were special trains then too...they carried people from Merthyr – my hometown – to Cardiff for the performances... they all crammed in, so I was told. Friends from Merthyr, neighbours, people from the chapel, the Band of Hope, the brass band, and they all sang my hymns and songs in the carriages as the train passed down through the valley to Cardiff. *Côr Caersalem, Aberystwyth, Myfanwey*, and they repeated around and around. It was the singing train!

We have an important person coming tonight. Have you met Mr. Thomas Edison? The great inventor?

They tell me that he's called 'the Wizard of Menlo Park'. ... met him last year in New York at an electricity event... asked him, 'do you have any Welsh in your new collection?' and to my surprise he said no but that he would indeed like to include it in his catalogue. So, tonight he'll be here to make a phonograph recording of parts of the performance, and he tells me that *Arianwen* will then be distributed as some kind of cylinder or roll, and be part of his Grand Opera collection, in a foreign language. Just imagine! Gomer handles the business details but think how many people will hear my *Arianwen* then!

Mr. Edison has also brought a machine for moving pictures...only in America!

Anyway, one thing's for certain...after this tour, *Arianwen* will have been performed over one hundred times, and as Mr. Edison says,

"What you are will show in what you do!"

Tone cathedrals...that's what they are...my operas ... praising and echoing in all directions. ...and *Arianwen* is my best-loved opera. One fellow wrote of my *Arianwen* ... I remember well – one always remembers *praise, by heart!*

“Joseph Parry’s ‘Arianwen’
contains enough melodies
to make half a dozen operas
such as are produced on the Continent
with superior construction,
harmony, and part-writing
to any that come to the mind
of any operatic composer.”

Not bad going, aye? Feel free to quote him...Dr Jones, by the way...I'll give you the text...

Next?

Oh, ... a Grand Opera! A master play, it will be... a commission for the Cardiff Festival ...Cardiff, Wales, not California... I've all the roles in my head – the story will be of Ann Thomas and Wil Hopkin from Llangynwyd. Another grand *tale*...

What's it called again...

In Welsh it will be *Y Ferch o Gefn Ydfa*...but for wider audiences *The Maid of Cefn-Ydfa* ... I already know how it's going to end...The lovers will both die at a young age and be buried near each other...one in the church, and the other outside the wall ... Oh, it'll be a marvellous tragedy!

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Take a synopsis of *Arianwen* to print for your readers, and please remind them that a limited number of seats are still available...and the audience is kindly requested to refrain from smoking and also applauding during the acts.

[FADE TO BLACK]

[*Scena*: dramatic section of an opera for solo singer - includes a recitative and arias]

Personal Paragraph:

GOMER THOMAS
publisher,
distinguished businessman,
friend for life - most times,
brother-in-law above forty years,
to Dr Joseph Parry.

Patriot,
organist, composer, conductor,
capable and steady,
overshadowed by

charismatic,
self-centred,
erratic
self-proclaimed
genius.

[LIGHTS UP]

Act II: The Mad Scene

[Gomer Thomas, the brother-in-law of Dr Joseph Parry is interviewed by the visiting journalist. They are in Mr Thomas' shop in Danville.]

Tell you about Joseph Parry? Oh, that's such a big question to answer.

Well, *Joe* Parry is who he is to me, and always will be, no matter what his fame. We became fast friends the day they moved in across the road... even the same age – thirteen. My mother was one of the Welsh 'welcome wagons' to help Mrs. Parry and the rest of the family get settled in Danville. It was a church thing. We were just boys. Joe's Dada, that's what he called him, had sent for the family to come from the 'old country', from Wales... It wasn't easy to understand him, at first. Joe, that is... his English was a bit odd. His family only spoke Welsh and he'd get so excited to tell me about things that it was all a fast jumble. He'd turn the Welsh construction into English, 'where to would you be going?', he'd say. Or 'how are you – I'm very good' thinking of *fi'n dda iawn, diolch*. Things like that. But funnily enough, I just knew what he was talking about. It's always been that way. He was a passionate fellow, even then. He mostly spoke of music and Merthyr, and then later, just about music!

Like I said, Joe's Da had sent for the family, as many men did back then. He'd come out first, you see, got work and found somewhere to live and then sent for them to come over here, to America. My Dad said that Mr. Parry was a skilled man and highly thought of down at the 'Owen Glendower' – the iron mills, as it was called then. He worked hard and got plenty of work... and in no time, he bought the house across the street, on a handshake, mind – he didn't read or write. Joe said that they'd had a very small rented cottage in Merthyr, for the six of them, AND three lodgers – no-one could buy a house back there. The rent collector would come to every home on the dot, on Thursdays, payday.

Joe's mam, Mrs. Elizabeth Parry, a nice lady, has a lovely soprano voice. Then there was Joe's brother Henry, and his sisters, Lizzie and Jane. Joe was a singer – a beautiful baritone he was after his voice broke – and Jane became quite well known as a singer up in the Wyoming Valley after she got married.

What do I think of what's been written? Well, a lot has been written about Joe, and a lot of it he's written himself, mind. You could say he's complicated! As

we say in Welsh, *pen mawr* (big head) or some would say with tongue in cheek, *pen bach* (small head).

What's he like? The same as he's always been - in a hurry, at everything – to get settled, to learn, to work, to practice, to study – and to make a name for himself. He's ambitious – and he's never been shy about telling everyone how good he is at whatever he's doing or done... it's like this ... let's put it this way, Joe never heard a tune that he couldn't part with!

'Gomer, Gomer – listen to this tune,' he'd say charging into our kitchen. And then he'd sing this beautiful tune that was going around in his head. He'd sing it well but often I'd have to tell him that someone else had written it. He'd heard it somewhere, sometime – and it had stuck. Back in Merthyr, the Cyfarthfa Brass Band, had played all kinds of songs and arrangements of Classical music. He'd heard Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn while walking around Merthyr, and at the steel works where the band played. After all, he worked there as a boy and the tunes had stuck. They were good ones, but they weren't his. There was the time that he sang Beethoven's Ninth, Ode to Joy... that says it all, doesn't it?

Sometimes though, he'd come over and they were his own, and they were really pleasing melodies. The boy was a singer and so it was natural for him to come up with a *singable* melody. When he first arrived, he couldn't read music, except for the *solfa* he'd learned at the 'Band of Hope' in Wales. But there were some first-class musicians that worked at the 'Rough and Ready' iron works, where Joe and I started out. Two of them, John Abel Jones and John M. Price taught him everything they knew about harmony and theory and composition, and how to play the organ, to conduct, and how-to sing. Joe was like a 'sponge' and he soaked it all up. Pretty soon he'd surpassed both of them. Mind you, he did repay his debts to them – mostly. Mr Price, who was also a conductor, told me that Joe was a very 'useful' member of his male choir called the 'Pennsylvania Glee Party'.

How did being a Welshman help him get started? It was everything!

The Welsh Congregational Church on Welsh Hill, where his family went to chapel, bought him a harmonium, a small one...and there he played for the chapel services and evening activities like the Band of Hope. Before long word got out that he was good, and he was offered a job as church organist at our prestigious

Mahoning Presbyterian Church. That was, and still is, where anyone who's anyone worships. He almost didn't take the job on account that he was so *Welsh*, but I told him that he'd be a fool not to do it if he wanted to get ahead. It was where the works owners, Mr Geisinger and Mr Beaver, among others, were members. They were a big help to him later.

Eisteddfodau? Once he started competing in the *eisteddfodau* – there were many of them in our part of Pennsylvania – a whole new world opened up for him. He was winning everywhere, and he won a lot of prize money. It was almost as much as he was earning at the 'Rough and Ready'. Then he started adjudicating – I remember his first time being up in Scranton... 1860 it was. And then, of course, some of the high points were the 'Nationals' in 1863 and 1865/6 in Wales. I remember the dates well too, but it was hard to be his friend in those years...you'll want to know why now...

We hadn't argued exactly, but we parted ways for about five years. You know the times, how it changed us. The Civil War... We were both 'called to the colors'. I served, and Joe had one of those 'bosses' at church buy him out of the draft for \$1000 – an absolute fortune then, and now - and a *substitute* was sent to war in his place.

Fair enough, yes, he was due to be married to Jane, my sister, that was right, but I didn't agree with what he'd done... we were all expected to fight, after all there was a cause ...a real just cause ... and when the call came from President Lincoln, I served with the men of Montour County. Joe stayed home and became head roller at the 'Rough and Ready' – an essential worker, indeed – but he went all over our region giving 'free' concerts to collect money for his own fund...not the war effort. He split our family for quite a bit of time – the war split us deep down ...though we weren't the only family that happened to, still...

Then Gettysburg happened ...July '63...yes, I was there...it was only a hundred miles or so south of Danville, but a world away from *home*. I made it through in one piece, thankfully, but I nearly didn't, and oh, so many tens of thousands died before it was done. The heat was almost unbearable, and the stench of death churned your insides. But I'll never forget the second night.

I haven't really talked about it – so hard, really. They'd been such loud and bloody two days that the silence of the night was eerie...and the stench of death...it was so hot... truth be told, it was more than I could handle...and the fear of the

next day and what the battle would bring was almost more than I could cope with...and to be fair, only one thing really saved me.

What saved me? Music. Well, to give him his due, it was Joe's anthem - kept me sane. One of the boys played it on his harmonica, 'Yr Arglwydd yw fy Mugail'...the twenty-third psalm... I lost myself in the sounds of his setting, and the words in my head ...in four-part harmony rang in my soul ... 'The Lord is my Shepherd...*Ie, pe rhodiwn ar hyd glyn cysgod angau*' - it engulfed me in its spirit and brought me quiet strength to accept whatever lay ahead. ...and then I was calmer, as a matter of fact, I've been able to stay that way with him ever since. He's a good man really, but he can be so infuriating at times... no sense, headstrong, and no head for business...Years later I published the anthem for him, and its part of my choir's standard repertoire now. It's a popular seller too...hasn't been 'out of print'...

When Henry - Joe's brother - and I came home in '65, Joe had sailed to Wales to compete at the National Eisteddfod. 'Pencerdd America' he called himself. Imagine! He's learned a good few things from us 'Yanks' - think big, be confident, ...he thinks a lot of himself...and it's all in the presentation!

Now I'll tell you a funny story - well, it gave me chuckle!

Over the years, Joe has been *back and fore* from Wales to America, maybe a score of times. And he's given concerts in all of the more than three hundred Cymric churches and communities across the States - they love him! He's one of them, when he wants to be, or if it suits him - he knows how to work the crowds. But I'm the one that makes the money on publishing his songs - he certainly drives up sales. It's a consolation that they love to set his music as test pieces in Eisteddfodau, here and in the 'old country'.

Have I been to Wales? A lot ask the same question...But America is my country...Danville is my home. My family came here from Blaenavon, and this is where I've stayed. I've fought for my country and done my part to forward the cause of emancipation. Never for a moment have I wished myself back in the 'old country' being, as someone said, 'cabin'd, cribb'd and confined'. No, absolutely not. The opportunities are here. The living is hard, you know, but it seems to me that there's a good life to be made here. I keep telling Joe, but he never listens!

Anyway, as I started to say – he told me this story himself, you know, as we were walking along the canal to Bloomsburg. My other shop was there – in Bloomsburg. Not as big a shop as the one here on Mill Street – but you can't miss it – it's got the gold coloured sign outside in the shape of a base viol. 'Music Emporium' - I deal in pianos, organs, harmoniums, sheet music: both foreign and domestic, with Welsh music being a speciality. By the way, I was the first publisher in Danville – I register all my copyrights with the government. 'Published by Gomer Thomas, Danville, PA'. Look me up!

You know it's said that the *name* of some famous men are as household names, such that everyone knows of them - but really only the wise recall that publicity has its limits. And fame doesn't reach everywhere.

Our Joe believes himself to be one of the most famous today – it would never occur to him that there'd be a Welshman anywhere who would not know of him. It's quite a radical notion really. He thinks his work is known throughout the world. But he did come to know of one at least, who had never heard the name, Dr Joseph Parry!

He'd been out West - the other side of the Rockies - and on the way back to Chicago he had to change trains somewhere in Colorado. In Denver, I think. It's of no consequence only to say that Joe had to get off the train, and there was a bit of a wait for the next one. As only Joe would, he asked the stationmaster if there were any Welsh living in the town. *Cymry*. On finding that there was indeed a respected gentleman from Wales, a doctor, living some streets away, he went to meet him.

'His name is on the house,' the stationmaster had said.

Pencerdd went with all enthusiasm, found the house and rang the bell. A tall gentleman, well put together, but rather stern looking opened the door.

'What do you want?'

'I understand that you are a doctor,' Joe said, 'and I am eager to shake your hand.'

'I don't know who you are,' the doctor replied dourly.

‘No, you do not, but you will recognize my name. I am the Doctor Joseph Parry from Wales.’

‘That may be,’ said the doctor. ‘But I must tell you that I have never heard of you. My family and I left Wales some time ago, and now we are proud Americans.’

Pencerdd nearly passed out, there, on the doorstep. To think that there was a Welshman – of a noble profession – one that could be imagined to be a cultured sort – and yet did not know the name *Pencerdd America!*

Not sure he ever lived that one down.

America ... a country of many wonders... don't you think? Joe had seen many of them on his journey, and more since, but the biggest wonder – one that not even Niagara Falls could compare – was a Welshman with a shiny brass plate at his door, who knew nothing of the creator of *Aberystwyth*.

‘Something hard to comprehend,’ I said to him, tongue in cheek, of course, ‘What can we learn from this?’

Joe couldn't find anything at all – he thought it was an amazing example of ignorance. Could be... but, as I told him... when we read speeches of praise, and the superficial praise about people who have received recognition, great and small, it's good to remember the man from Denver – when he pours cold water on your fame, claiming that he knows nothing of your existence. To him, *Pencerdd*, who thinks himself the centre of creation, it is a blessing occasionally to meet the man from Denver, to whom he lives not at all.

Observe this fine cane... it aids me to walk, every day... the handle carries the inscription –

‘Presented to Gomer Thomas
by his many friends.
Danville, Penn,
December 13th, 1879’

It's one of my dearest treasures, and I carry it to remind me of who I am, and where I belong.

The other day I donated one of the finest pianos in my shop to the County Hospital to help ease the stay of those souls treated there. The hospital is on the outskirts of town, up on the hill, near the cemetery.

[FADE TO BLACK]

[Recitative: for solo voice, lightly accompanied, for narrative to forward the plot.]

Personal Paragraph:

(found poem created from the papers of *Daralaw*)

Had he broken the ties of sentimentality;
had he dwelt in Vienna, or London;
had his compositions been less of little Wales and its history;
had he allowed his genius a free reign with subject aesthetic,
and legendary,
had he written dramatic and tragic opera;

with the wealth of melody he possessed,
he would have thrilled nations,
his fame universal.

[LIGHTS UP]

Act III: Sire of Song, *Still*'ð

[Joseph Parry is at the graveside of his father, Daniel. A new headstone has recently been placed on the grave. Joseph Parry needs to speak to his father – he speaks in a subdued tone, with reverence.]

Dada, there's tidy you look ... 'Daniel Parry, 1799-1866' you're official here now, Dad... sorry it's taken so long to put your headstone on. *Gwell hwyr na hwyrach*, I hope. That's what you used to say or was it 'better never be late'! Money was a bit tight, but I wanted you to have something special. Bethesda bluestone, that's what the mason called it...the closest I could get to Welsh...at least the Welsh of Pennsylvania mined it for you. It's strong and should last.

It's lovely up here...I'd forgotten how fresh the air is – reminds me of 'going up the mountain' with you as a boy in Merthyr. Oh, I know they were miserable times for you, for us all, but up on that mountain, up above the dirt and the dust, after chapel, it was so free...nothing was expected of me then...tunes in my head, chapel on Sundays, and...

It's hard being *y Doctor Mawr* lately ...everyone expects of me, and they don't know me – actually, I'm not so sure of myself lately. *O'r frest* – from the heart, that's what I need to say...but I'm not sure who to tell...but I'll talk to you, Dada. You always understood... I need to speak to hear what's happening to me...

You're in good company, up here, Dada...Civil War vets, American War, Mexican War ...and all these fine people from Germany...I'm sure they must sing Beethoven... *Eneidiau mewn bedd* ... 'souls at rest' ... so many born in countries far from here ... stones in English, German, Yiddish, and symbols of somewhere, I don't know. And now there's yours in Welsh –

Am hynny byddwch chwithau barod

Canys yn yr awr ni thybioch

Y daw mab y dyn.

Therefore, be ye ready

For in the hour ye think not
will come the Son of Man.

That verse has been on my mind a lot lately. Be ready, for in the hour ... It could be anytime, and there's so much to do. Hard to take in that you've been gone thirteen years, almost to the day....so many times I've been told that Welsh sounds like Hebrew when you sing it. ...You liked Danville, didn't you? A good opportunity for everyone...that's what you said...but I can't stay here, Dada...

On the edge you are here, Dada...nobody else near you...easier for me to talk though...*gair neu ddau*...a few words...that's how it's always been for me...on the outer edge...

Diolch i ti...Yn fy ngwaith y mae fy mywyd! My life is my work! That's me. Always has been... never really been about the money but making money's so important to get my music out...and there's the family, of course ...never seems to be enough.... working all the time. I know it's what I do...but if I'm not teaching, then I'm composing, or adjudicating or conducting...and I'm always travelling. I'm almost 60 now – not much younger than you, when you left us, Dada... And there's always some snag with the commissions when they come in – there's a delay, or they change their minds, and the big pieces need to get out. It's very frustrating...I think they're a bit jealous of me...or they like to show that they can hold things up...won't get the better of me....I've started up another college – one for all of Wales – but, oh...it's not really going as well as I'd hoped... Mendi says it's because I'm away so much... the travel's what I have to do for the extras... *Fyddde ti'n deall?*... but it's hard, and it's rough on Jane.

...I can't do the everyday things, Dada...did it for years as a boy...but there's got to be meaning...a reason for doing...I can see the finish...but can't do the process...that's what Gomer says...think he's right...my mind works too fast...maybe...

Syrthio i'r tân that's how I'm feeling, like I'm falling into the fire. It's hard to explain, but there's such a weight to being famous.

What's in a name, eh? Y Doctor Mawr!...they expect so much of me...I expect even more of myself...but recently I've been feeling as if the earth is going to swallow me up....the smoke's coming and having run from it... I'm about to fall into the fire...and it's burning anthracite coal...*glo carreg – a glo caled*.

'Watch the fire,' that's what you used to tell me. Do you remember? When we were at the Rough and Ready. 'Stop singing tunes in your head and watch out for the fiery furnace....it'll eat you alive... at full blast...' Ha! I was so full of the music I was learning... Joe Music...that's what I was...not paying attention...they were good times...sometimes...used to be shy with not speaking too much English...but then when I got it, ...*cymmer anal*, you'd say...breathe...but it was the music, it was...oh...so thrilling...every day...it was like learning a new language....a bit more every day...a new exciting world...and I was running towards it...sprinting...

Things have been tough, Dada... these last years.... You've got to talk to me, Jane says. Not like when you're 'on stage' ... no...when you've lost someone dear to you...the life's been ripped out of me... there's no control, and what's normal is different...

It's as a balm...music, helps me grieve, and then... go on beyond the cadence of pain...but don't ask me to *talk* about how I'm feeling...I'm just no good at it...I've lost two people that I've truly loved...wish I could talk...

What should I do, Dada? How do I carry on? Who am I?

'All roads lead to Merthyr,' that's what you'd say... you showed me how to be a migrant...the work drew you from the poverty of the green Welsh countryside to the opportunities of the dirty pits of 'the Valleys' ...and when the 'living' was too little for us, the family there... to America you went...Welsh Pennsylvania...even though you didn't speak the language...

Jane thinks I'm not well...you and Mama didn't want me to marry her, Jane... *Saesneg fydd y cwbul!* ...you were right, English is what we speak together, but she's been good for me....'the other side of the canal' she was...the best side for me...*fy nghymar*...

Number Thirteen ... where we lived... Elm Street ...the home that you gave us, Dada... the chance at a better way of life. Opportunity....and a house of our own...no rent collectors...just sealed the deal with a handshake...

To think that at the Welsh chapel up on Welsh Hill and the ironworks...that's where it started ...and now look at me...an American-Welshman with two passports...or just a Welshman with one country...*Canmol dy wlad a thrig ynddi* – praise your country and live in it...Wales is the one for me, but I'm more loved in America...more extraordinary here, perhaps.

Ni waeth beth fo lliw'r Delyn os da'r ganic...matters not what colour the harp if the melody is sweet...that's what you'd say.

...I wasn't here ...when you passed, Dada... still feel guilty about that...hope you can forgive me... but Wales called... had to go to claim my '*Pencerdd America*'...a name I've had to live up to ever since... bit daunting at times...can't tell anyone that...think Jane knows...but I never say it...out loud, I mean...

...a cemetery of immigrants up here...Gomer's choir sang this morning...wanted to pay tribute to you, boys that worked with you at the 'Owen Glendower', and me at the 'Rough and Ready'.... Did you hear them?... They sang my hymn for you ... 'Aberystwyth', after all, you were from Ceredigion ...a *Cardi* boy! Verse in Welsh and verse in English...*Iesu, gyfaill f'enaïd gwan* ...Jesus, lover of my soul...

Wrote another hymn-tune the other day for a fellow from South Africa...bit like *Aberystwyth*...he reminded me of you, Dada...a Methodist...quiet, kind man...Enoch Sontaga...*Enoc dydd Sul*...like we'd call people ...that was his name...I gave him some lessons...it's a nice tune...God Bless Africa, the words he used...that's what it says...on Sundays...that's when I can talk...every Sunday when I write a new hymn...write my own prayer...*pader...pob 'Hedð i'th lwch,* 'Dada.

'Myfanwy' ...Jane was so very jealous of her...there were stories that there was a real Myfanwy for me...that I'd written the love song for her...for Myfanwy...took a while before my Jane

believed me...especially when it got to be so famous... ..really popular...the beauty is it's simple, that's what you told me...don't make life so hard, it'll get hard soon enough...a simple song...a tune for anytime ...exquisite...stunningly poignant, someone said... just one man singing to his girl...my Jane... (*he sings, in translation*)

*Pabam mae dichter, O Myfanwy
Yn llenwi'th lygaid duon di?*

Myfanwy, why such anger,
in your dark eyes?
No smile on those fair cheeks
when me you see.
Where did it go?

*A'th ruddiau tirion, O Myfanwy,
Heb wrïdo wrth fy ngweled i?
Pa le mae'r wên oedd ar dy wefus
Fu'n cynnau 'ngbariad ffyddlon ffôl?*

The smile on lips that
sparked my foolish, loyal love.
Where is it?
The sound of sweet words drawing
my heart to you.

*Pa le mae sain dy eiriau melys,
Fu'n denu'n nghalon ar dy ôl?
Ni cheisiaf fyth mo'th law, Myfanwy,
Heb gael dy galon gyda hi.*

Never, Myfanwy,
your hand will I seek,
Unless with it comes your heart.

She's in hymnals now... *Ffarwel Myfanwy*...my love song... almost folk-like you could say...and in the Mormon Hymnal, with different words of course – and a few other denominations besides... remember those Mormons coming to Merthyr? Missionaries they called themselves...wanted us to go *gyda'r Saint*...they've been good to me, in Salt Lake City...adjudicating their eisteddfod and conducting their cymanfa... *Twp* it was, *twp*... sold my rights to *Myfanwy* to a publisher in Wales...Gomer says, leave the business side of things to him...I know, but ... Bad enough that Jane was jealous of *Myfanwy* and now there's no money coming from her to us. Like you'd say, Dada.... '*...dodd dim pris ci arno i*' ... bad mistake on my part!

I've tried to make amends...to my Jane...I hope it works, I hated it when she was angry with me... but I'm trying...with *Arianwen*...it's my favorite opera...the Danville crowds loved it last night...should make some money... wrote a new love song, just for Jane...Will Mostyn sings it...wrote the words myself...what do you think, Dada?

Arianwen, dear, if thou art near,
Behold my dire distress;
Apart from thee the world to me
Is but a wilderness;
The livelong day I pine away,
Forsaken and unblest:
The weary night in dismal plight,
I seek in vain for rest;
Arianwen! Arianwen!
The weary night in dismal plight,
I seek in vain for rest.

Arianwen fair, would that I were
A thrush on yonder tree,
My early lay at break of day
I'd sing to waken thee;

The smiles which grace thy winsome face,
Perchance might oft be mine;
With such a sight for my delight,
My heart would ne'er repine;
Arianwen! Arianwen!
With such a sight for my delight
My heart would ne'er repine.

...sure hope she understands...*gobeithio'n fawr*...it's the most popular song of the opera...the aria...being picked up as a 'solo' for eisteddfodau...had to write it in English for Jane, but I did write a version in Welsh first... more natural for me...then translated it...

Got a secret, Dada... can't tell anyone...not even Jane...it's eating away at me...not sure what to do...really...no-one can know...it would be the end of me..in Wales, anyway... I'm afraid...and I can't tell anyone...I'm not sure I've got that 'magic touch' any more...not in Welsh...they don't respond to me as they did...my music...there's this new crop...I keep telling them that there needs to be better education...but I'm the one that needs it...the status...the recognition...'nothing makes you as lonely as your secrets'...take it from me...I'm ploughing on...new songs and concerts...but ...they want something different...

They loved it...when we did Arianwen in Cardiff... it was a huge success....the crowds, the press even...but those chapel preachers...they objected to my doing an opera in a 'theatre'...can you imagine...eh....they preached it...they put it in the papers....the crowd sizes went down...but I still tried...'damned if you do, damned if you don't'... the tours are good...especially in America...they like the variety...but I've still got to be careful...some of these chapels are extreme too... no opera, no baseball, no trolley car....on Sundays...

Bum yn byw yn gynnwl gynnwl
Aeth un ddafad i mi'n ddwy fil.
Bum yn byw yn afrad, afrad
Aeth y ddwy fil yn un ddafad.

That's what you used to say...live frugally...chance would be a fine thing...before coming to the States I was in Cwm Gwendraeth conducting a Cymanfa Ganu. It was very successful...as mine always are...very well attended...afterwards, the treasurer was walking me back to the train station, to get home...he said, I've got your money here in this envelope...the three pounds that we pay...I told him that my fee, as he could appreciate...given my stature and attraction...was ten pounds....he rumaged through his pockets and said I've only got five pounds on me to give you, will that do?...I told him that he could post the balance to me...

Five years ...that's how long it's been.... since we lost him... he was only thirty ... more pain than I knew a man could endure... no father should live longer than his son...he was such a fine musician ...probably a better one than I am....wasn't much of a father to him really... always away, I was ...Jane was so good with them all...loved them, course I did, but no good at showing that either...even when I was home, my mind was somewhere else...we didn't see the signs...his hands shaking...and him such a fine organist... teaching in London ...he fell over...tripped...but that wasn't it, really...it was slow and then it was fast...all over...everything's changed since we buried him.

Y galon yn llosgi...burning ...that's how it felt, smelting in a cauldron of grief, and the sparks spitting around me... a cacophony of sound, that was my mind ...it's always that way, but this time it was so very different... turning like an out-of-tune orchestra every instrument playing a different song. And even though I was tapping the tip...waving my baton, the sound got even worse. Horrible, it was... the music in me faded...my rock... couldn't hear the music anymore... jagged tunes – crashing and dissonant, swirling and swishing...everything had changed.

*Dwy aden colomen, pe cawn,
Mi bedwn a chrwydrwn ymbell
I weled ardal oedd sydd well;
A'm golwg tu arall i'r dŵr,
Mewn hiraeth am weled y Gŵr*

*Two wings of a dove, had I
To fly and wander afar
To see better places;
Beyond water, a vision,
In longing to behold the Lord.*

Do you remember those words, Dada? The words of my hymn tune, 'Caernarvon', they'd come to me, so often, in snippets of phrases –

*...A rodiodd yr afon o'm blaen;
...Fe rwygwyd y maen oedd dan sêl
...Mi a'i caraf, a deued a ddêl
..Ni allaf, tra yma'n y cnawd
Ddim dal y caniaidau sydd fry...*

*...travelled the river before me;
...the foundation rock shook
...I will love him, come what may
...I cannot, while alive
Hold the songs above ...*

Like a slate splitting, I was ...lightning never strikes twice, but it did. Look after him for me, please Dada... he's a good boy....they both are...

'You can't stop the pain,' Gomer said, 'but you needn't suffer alone'.

That's what he said, Dada. That's what his cablegram to me said. That, and ... 'come home!'

He helped me ... true to his word he was. Then, and now. Always has been, mind, he doesn't write good songs...his melodies don't touch the heart...they're too sensible...in his head...that's what I needed to help me get through...a dose of sensible...

'Keep loving him,' that's what Rev Dr Edwards said, you know him, *Cynonfardd*... he said, even though he's gone, and a

corner inside you is smashed and shattered...forever... create a beautiful new garden around it.'

I've kept his baton...and his organ shoes...can't part with them....I'll wear them now and then...not my size but close enough...he was such a good son...can't say his name...I'll wear them tonight, the shoes, when I play for service at Mahoning Presbyterian...seems right...we'll be leaving tomorrow... You will look after him, won't you? I couldn't. I tried... a new suite I've written for the musical interlude, it's got three tones, 'Regret, Mirth and Courage...'

[CURTAIN DOWN]

Postlude

‘Writing about death is for the living,’

a wise saying, overheard.

An obituary
written
as if by
the columnist
and music critic
for
the Welsh diaspora
of America.

1903

OBITUARY: Joseph Parry, Mus. Doc. (Cambridge)

May 21, 1841 - February 17, 1903

Pencerdd America, Y Doctor Mawr

‘The musical world has suffered an irreparable loss in recent weeks with the death’ of the pre-eminent Cambro-American composer, Dr Joseph Parry.

Dr Parry had been unwell for but a brief time and died following a surgery that was performed at his home in Penarth, South Wales, on February 17, 1903. He was 62 years old. The Doctor’s family was with him at the passing - his wife, Jane (née Thomas), his son, Dr D. Mendelssohn Parry, and his daughters, Annie Edna, and Dilys. His sons, Joseph Haydn (1864-1894) and William Sterndale (1872-1892) had preceded him in death, along with his father, Mr Daniel Parry (d. 1866) of Danville, PA, and Merthyr Tydfil, Wales.

Pencerdd America was how Dr Parry was known to many, the bardic name he took when received into the ‘Gorsedd y Beirdd’ at the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1865. A man of many parts and many moods, his creative output exceeded over one thousand works. The comprehensive list includes ten operas including the famous ‘Blodwen’ and the popular ‘Arianwen’, hundreds of hymns best known are ‘Aberystwyth’, ‘Danville’, ‘Sirioldeb’ and ‘Côr Caersalem’, oratorios, anthems, organ works, songs and ballads, the delightful cantata for children, ‘Ymgom yr Adar’, and, of course, ‘Myfanwy’.

The Eisteddfod tradition played a critical role in Dr Parry’s career - as it does for many of us here living far away from our birth land. The National Eisteddfod of 1863, when Dr Parry’s talents as a composer were recognized by the distinguished teacher and musician, Sir Brinley Richards of the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), London who along with John Thomas, *Pencerdd Cymru* and others initiated a fund to allow Dr Parry to continue his studies at the RAM. It would be the hymn tune ‘Aberystwyth’ that drew their attention.

In 1874, Dr Parry was appointed the first Professor of Music at the University of Wales, in Aberystwyth, having first studied with the great teachers at the Royal Academy of Music in London and later receiving his Mus. Doc from the University of Cambridge. During his lifetime, he established music schools in Danville, Pennsylvania, Aberystwyth, Swansea and Cardiff. At the time of his death he was a music professor at the University of South Wales in Cardiff. He had been organist at the Welsh Congregational Church and Mahoning Presbyterian Church in Danville, Pennsylvania, and Ebenezer Chapel in Swansea, South Wales.

The Welsh communities of America will remember Joseph Parry as the talented and charismatic fellow from Merthyr Tydfil. The thirteen-year-old ironworker immigrated to Danville, Pennsylvania in 1854 and through dedication, hard work, seizing opportunities, and not being shy about asking for help from his many Welsh immigrant friends became *Y Doctor Mawr*.

Joseph Parry realized the dream that his father, Daniel, and our families have all shared at some time: that of making a better life.

As Americans from Wales, we can be very proud of the talent that we fostered. The ironworkers of Danville, PA and Youngstown, Ohio, especially, raised vast amounts of dollars to help Dr Parry study in London from 1868-1871. His Danville-Welsh music teachers, John Abel Jones and John M. Price had set him on the right track. His good friend and brother-in-law Gomer Thomas, a notable publisher and business owner got him known and made famous many of Dr Parry's early compositions.

Joseph Parry was a musical genius who never forgot his Welsh heritage nor the support he received from his fellow Welsh immigrants. Even though he lived in Wales for the last twenty-nine years of his life, he made some eleven journeys back to the United States to freely share his music through concert tours. It is thought that he visited all of the hundreds of Welsh churches across the States - and many of those several times over. Everyone knew him, and his entrepreneurial spirit took full advantage of that perceived fact.

In recent years, it has been the way to belittle Dr Parry's style of writing. Time alone will show how well his contribution will endure. Fair to say that he wrote much but did not edit enough. There is no denying that his music came from his Welsh heart, and the memorable melodies that survive will be beloved for all time.

Joseph Parry, *Y Doctor Mawr*, our sire of song, and Cambro-American brother - rest in peace, *hedd i'w lwch*.

Personal Paragraphs:
(found poem, from the papers of *Daralaw*)

Joseph Parry

America

His adolescence spent in fair Columbia
Prepared his art for subsequent acclaim;
Brave Gwalia, blest America, forever
Combined in him a citadel of fame.

Wales

Enshrined within his heart the love of Cambria
Consumed him as a dark, tormenting cloud;

*My country, and my country's glorious music
Shall be my lodestar, - gospel of good will,
And may my music, born in foreign empire
Enthuse, enthral, and every bosom thrill.*

Patriotism

The muse became his servant; from her bosom
Flowed copious draughts of pure, rewarding song,
Musician? Yes, and yet withal a patriot,
With love of country next to that of God,
His love for old Gwalia he'd always maintain,
In song of the valley, the hill and the plain;

Wales,

Land of the sweet nightingales;
How dear its name, how sweet its fame,
Its honour he'd ever proclaim.

Extract, in translation.

Drylliwyd y Delyn
The Shattered Harp
gan Elvet* / in translation

*Dystawodd y gân, fe ddrylliwyd y Delyn
Diflanodd y cerddor dan niwloedd y bedd.
Yn araf y cerddwn, a lleddf yw yr emyn
Wrth feddwl amdano a chofio ei wedd.*

Song silenced, a harp shattered.
Minstrel vanished through death's veil.
Solemn stride of hymn in mode minor,
As we his departed spirit hail.

*Er dryllio y delyn, a dattod ei thannau
A beidiodd y gân dan gysgodion yr yw?
Daw adsain o bell, fel tôn ar hywrnosau,
Os claddwyd y cerddor, mae'r gerdd eto'n fyw.*

Strings unravelled, a harp smashed.
Can song in shadow be shrouded?
Meandering at matins a lilt from afar,
Though buried its creator, the air resounded.

*Swn ei gân sydd ar y mynydd, swn ei gân sydd yn y
fro;
Lleinw'r aelwyd a llawenydd pan fo'r ydlan dan ei thô
Gyda'r bugail ar y bryniau, ar y Sabboth gyda'r côr
Llifo, llifo mae y sieniau fel afonydd tua'r môr.*

His song sings on mount, sings in vale;
Joyous hearth with harvest heaped,
With shepherd on hills, Sundays with choir.
Flow, flowing sounds as rivers stream to sea.

*Fry, fry uwch cymylau a niwloedd y nen.
Daw barddaf freuddwydion y cerddor i ben.
Ni chollir mo'r hiraeth forðwyodd at Dduw
Mae cân y canïadau'n oes oesoedd i fyw.*

High o'er clouds and mists of heaven,
Musician's dreams most beautiful cease.
Yearning ties remain for the Reign
in eternal Songs of Praise. / Peace.

[*Er cof annwyl am Dr Joseph Parry; yn ymraddedig i Mrs Parry.*]

In memory of Dr Joseph Parry; presented / dedicated to Mrs Parry.

* Elvet (Elfed Lewis) was one of the ministers that officiated at Dr Joseph Parry's funeral at St. Augustine's Church, Penarth, Wales. The sheet music of this anthem was found in the papers of Gwilym Jones, Chicago.

Chief of Song
Now Proudly first of
Gwalia's Minstrel Throng
Far beyond Cambria's celestial shore.
A Master play his last lay.

Croeso! Bienvenido! Welcome to the United States of America

*Let us swear allegiance to a land that's free...
As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer...
From the mountains, to the prairies,
To the oceans white with foam,
God bless America, my home, sweet home.
Irving Berlin*

Croeso, one of many words on the wall of the Arrivals Hall at Chicago O'Hare International Airport. It is simply a word to many, but to me as a new immigrant from Wales, its familiarity ran deep and was a warm welcome.

'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.'

This inscription on the Statue of Liberty at the mouth of the Hudson river in New York, has greeted countless immigrants and migrants from all corners of the world. That was not me on June 2, 1996, and yet maybe it was, as I was hungry for the opportunity to breathe deeply and sing my way to a new life of opportunities. Both thrilled and terrified by the journey, on a limited budget, nevertheless I was energized to follow my dream.

On my arrival at the airport, I was directed into a segregated hall to be processed by a stern group of immigration officials with guns in their holsters. Clutched in my hand was the telephone number for my immigration attorney, just in case something went wrong. 'I don't anticipate any problems,' he'd told me, 'but you never know'. A cautious advisor, he was sitting at the ready in his office in East Lansing, Michigan. In my arms was the large dossier that the American Embassy in London had returned to me after my interview, the swearing of an oath, and the issuance of my Green Card visa. Being a young-*ish*, single white woman of thirty, I was formally ushered through the hall without any problem – though the young family from India in front of me did not get such treatment. At the time, theirs was a far more intense scrutiny, and I wondered why.

My case had been argued, and a Green Card granted, based on my being a Welsh-language mezzo-soprano singer. With the help of my immigration lawyer and the countless expert testimony of colleagues and friends in the U.S.A. and back home in the U.K., we had proven my worth as an EB-1 status Green Card visa – ‘an alien, of extraordinary ability’. An ‘Einstein Visa’ status issued to only about four percent of immigrants. Little wonder that my successful case was on the homepage of my attorney’s website along with that of an award-winning Russian economist.

At O’Hare airport, there was no ‘welcome team’ to meet me, I was on my own. I was familiar with the city, having studied there with a voice teacher whose studio was in the historical Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue. The building was over ten floors high filled with studios and arts organizations, all serviced by two cage-like elevators. These were manned by elderly gentlemen seated on high stools, who cranked open the gate handles while calling out the floor and main studios. Little did I know then that in the same building over sixty years earlier, the Welsh-American composer and conductor, Dr Daniel Protheroe, also had his studio where he taught voice and composition. The building had been designed and built around the time of the 1893 World’s Fair, a spectacular catalyst for Chicago’s growth and a showcase to the world of America’s second city. One of its many grand activities was the International Eisteddfod that attracted competitors from across the United States and from Wales.

Daniel Protheroe, the twenty-seven-year-old conductor who had emigrated from Ystradgynlais, Wales to Scranton, Pennsylvania, the anthracite capital of America, won a gold medal at the Chicago Eisteddfod. The choir that he formed, *Ŵ Cymrodorion*, comprising over two hundred Welsh-speaking immigrants, won second prize in the main choral competition and took home \$1000 in prize money. The first prize-winners were also from Scranton, another two hundred-plus Welsh choir called the Scranton Pennsylvania Choral Union that included in its ranks, German and Irish immigrants. The third prize went to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir directed by their Welsh-American conductor, Evan Stephens. The pageantry of the event was phenomenal: choirs travelled by train charter, and the winners were hailed as heroes as thousands gathered at the Scranton Lackawanna train station to welcome them home. At a time of world economic depression with a very low poverty line, the prize money was a fortune. The winning purse was \$5000.

On that hot summer Sunday afternoon in June 1996, I was eager to get going, to launch my international opera singing career. I took a taxi to the home of the couple that had offered to house me for the first few months. They were strangers to me, friends of friends, but they were very kind people. I had two large suitcases, one full of clothes while the other held my prized books and music scores, and a heavy laptop with a *Compuserve* account that could connect email by dial-up to my parents in Llanelli.

For the first few months, I lived on the plush historical Sheridan Avenue in Evanston in the eclectic home of Beth and Richard Kohlemeinan. They helped me to get adjusted. Coincidentally, they had once lived in Greece where they had a Welsh nanny. Several years later when I was *Arweinydd y Cymry Tramor* (Leader of the Welsh from Overseas) at the 2000 National Eisteddfod of Wales in Llanelli, I met the former nanny and her minister husband. It is a small world when you are Welsh!

In Evanston, every part of the ordinary things of life would be new to me. Frequently, I would think that it would be far easier if I did not speak the language, as no one would expect me to understand the process of what needed doing. The list was long: a new bank account, establishing credit, tax forms and withholdings, health insurance, state identification, Social Security card - there were so many! All were part of the materials that would go into my book, 'the experiences of a crazy new immigrant' - not yet written, as I was too busy trying to quickly figure things out and survive for the next chapter of my life.

The Green Card, as I thought, was my ticket to stardom, at least to realizing my dreams – it was my dreamcatcher. It allowed me to do anything a US citizen could do except vote or, as I discovered, compete for the New York Metropolitan Opera Auditions. 'I'm sorry,' said the Administrator's voice on the phone, 'your application is fine, but we only audition US citizens!' On to the next then, and at the end of June, I flew down to Washington, D.C. to sing an audition for the Chicago Lyric Opera's apprentice program. I had missed them in Chicago, so I caught up with them in the nation's capital. What did I sing? 'Erda's Warning' from *Das Rheingold* by Wagner and the gypsy's, 'Stride la vampa' from Verdi's *Il Travatore*. The roles of Erda and Azucena are not large, but each is a super dramatic presence on stage, and their words are showstoppers, changing the story's ending.

Although I was not destined to sing Erda and Azucena on stage, the role of the show changer reappeared to me more recently while studying Joseph Parry's

Arianwen. In the composer's manuscript I came across the role of Beggi Wyllt, a witch sung by a mezzo-soprano. Her story-altering song in Act Three voices goodness, which paves the way for 'great rejoicing brings the opera to a close'.

Simple Gifts, Tornados and Harps

I roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps...

When the sun comes shining, then I was strolling...

And all around me, a voice was sounding...

The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting

This land was made for you and me.

(from 'This Land is your land' by Woody Guthrie)

What is folk music? In Welsh, it is *canu gwerin* – the singing, or songs of the ordinary everyday people. It is the beginning or the foundation, bringing to mind the Welsh expression, *dechrau wrth dy draed* – start at your feet for the tapping of a regular rhythm to a simple tune spinning a yarn.

Folk song, or more precisely, the music of Wales, soon became my inroad to America. The scope of Welsh music ranging from folk songs to art songs, gave me a repertoire, a song bag, from which to draw, matching my voice type.

In singing Welsh songs to Americans, I soon realised that I needed to convey them in a different manner so that my new audiences could appreciate the words. A strophic song, repeating verse after verse in the Welsh of a folk song, would not mean much to a non-Welsh speaking audience. The arrangements had to be such that some different things happened or that the song should be through-composed, shifting to match the text and the sentiment. *Songs of Wales* was the title of my first recording, released with *Tân y Ddraig* (fire of the dragon) on the Green Dragon label out of Evanston, Illinois.

On the road constantly performing, I had many opportunities to test my theories and fine-tune my approach. One of those came about after a serious storm.

+ + +

The sky turns orange, and then a strange a shade of green, much as the hue of the fluorescent dye in the Chicago River on St. Patrick's Day. It should not be there, but it is a foreboding. Get ready, it says, your world is about to be twisted into mayhem. Only once have I seen the sky that shade of green, but the orange precursor has come around several times. Living in the Midwest of the United States, one comes to expect such a phenomenon.

I had only been living in the Chicago suburbs for a few months when my first orange, with a touch of green, happened, and the sirens hollered their alerts. Take cover. Fast. We were safe in Evanston but down in Berea, Kentucky, the tornado punched the community, and so we went to help in the only possible way, by giving a benefit concert of Welsh music.

We were going to Appalachia my harpist friend Liz Cifiani told me. I had no idea where exactly but as Liz was driving (with the harps packed into the back of the mini-van), I was content to relax in the front seat with my songs already memorised. They were the familiar folk pieces *Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn, Suo Gân, Paid a Deud*, and the art songs of Meirion Williams and Dilys Elwyn Edwards, such as *Gwynfyd* and *The Cloths of Heaven*, amongst others. It was all going to be with harp accompaniment, so it seemed appropriate to throw in some *penillion* singing.

The harps in the back were the magnificent Lyon and Healy pedal harp, with its gorgeous tones for the bigger sounds of my voice, the Triplett Excelle wire-strung for a very different steely resonance, and the double harp evoking echoes of a Welsh triple-harp. A musical road trip indeed, and we were headed south for the hills.

'We need a song!' Liz said, as she eased into the highway traffic. We whirred through six or seven lanes of traffic mingling with the flow for downtown Chicago, before heading south out of the city. Affectionately called the windy city, Chicago was wildly hot and humid that day in late August 1996. We passed the signature skyscrapers to our left, the John Hancock, named for one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and the Sears Tower – the tallest in America, until overtaken by the World Trade Towers in New York.

'What about a folk song, an early American one?'

Major highways intersected and passed over each other. Traffic screamed past in a blur of hurry and honking. Cars, vans, buses, and the huge trucks – the eighteen-wheelers – all were carrying their loads somewhere. It was easy to keep track of the journey: the 'evens' go across the country, and the 'odds' go up and down. We were taking I-90 west until we hit I-65 south. Down the side and around the bottom of Lake Michigan we went, to Gary, then over to Indianapolis, and south into Kentucky. Then taking I-75 east we passed the state's second city, Lexington on our last leg to our destination, Berea. It was a journey of nine hours, with rest stops.

The measuring of distance in the United States, as I soon came to realize, is figured in units of time rather than miles or kilometres. It is thought of in terms of how long it will take to get somewhere, rather than how far it is to get to where you are going.

The only way to describe the interstate journey from Illinois through Indiana with nasty looking industrial areas skirted by expansive farmland yielding wheat, soybean and corn crops, is simply flat. But when we crossed over the Ohio River, the flowing northern state line of Kentucky, the terrain changed. We were on the edge of Appalachia. The grass was greener, a blue green even, and the landscape undulated with rolling hills. Lush pastures with extensive, costly fencing held prize winning horses whiling away the sunny afternoon. We were passing through racehorse country, heading further south to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. No wonder James Still referred to the sense of place in Appalachia as 'earth loved more than any other earth'.

The Cherokee called the Appalachians 'the unending mountains', an apt name as they span a swath of North America. They rise in Alabama in the south, cross Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Maryland, New York, before entering Canada and ending at the north end of Belle Isle, in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador. We were going to a tiny corner along the foot of the Cumberland Plateau.

The music of this region is rich with the influence of its early settlers from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, all with an Appalachian twist. It often reflects the way of life of the 'mountain people', resilient and enduring, especially the women, with a grit and 'make do' attitude that rings through in the 'edgy' music of the area. The folk songs and ballads are at times laden with the hymn-like style of call and response expressing pain, joy and praise. The song catchers or musicologists of the early twentieth century travelled the hills, listening to the tunes and recognizing the European influences. The songs that had been passed down orally from generation to generation are now saved for posterity in print. They are the 'folk' of the blue grass.

I'll go there anytime, in a skinny minute!

The Berea concert was to help Liz's friends. They had a B&B, 'the Weaver's Bottom', where Liz would stay when on her way down to North Carolina or Florida. They were artisans weaving the most beautiful tapestries in the colours of Appalachia using the old-style hand looms. In their workroom, they would play the

local folk instruments such as the Mountain dulcimer, popular in the region, but their speciality was the ‘sweetheart’ dulcimer, which they played sitting together, facing each other, with the instrument on their laps.

‘The twister hit us back in April – it was a mess. It crossed Interstate 75 near the Berea interchange, and swirled clear down Chestnut Street. The noise was deafening. Luckily, we made it to the basement in time, but it tore the roof right off our building.’ Neal greeted us as we arrived at ‘the Weaver’s Bottom’. ‘Just like a tin of corned beef – it was peeled right off. The National Guard was brought in to stop the looting in town, but things are quiet now. Too quiet. We’re out of business too, and the insurance people are really dragging their heels. Mary’s devastated. We both are, but especially Mary, her instruments are ruined, and our looms are seriously damaged.’

In looking back at that day, Mary was broken-hearted, jittery, and fearful, and was having trouble speaking. But the upcoming concert gave her something to focus on, and hopefully, any funds raised would help to fill a big gap both spiritually and materialistically.

Scheduled to join us on stage for the special concert were the other performers, *Healing Hands*. Ron and Carol Price were on a big road trip from Washington State in the Northwest, across the Midwest, and down through Kentucky to North Carolina. ‘Ron teaches harp to people with neurological illnesses,’ Liz explained. ‘It works. People struggling with terrible illnesses are really feeling the benefits of playing the harp.’ Ron on harp, and Carol on hammered dulcimer were giving concerts and masterclasses across the country to raise awareness for their programme, stopping in Berea to help Neal and Mary.

Berea College is a special place that serves the youth of Appalachia and the Commonwealth of Kentucky – ‘It’s a first-rank tuition-free college. Actually, you can’t go there if you can afford college fees,’ Liz told me. ‘Every student is given a job to do at the college while they’re getting their education.’ The college started out in the early 1850s as an ‘anti-slavery, anti-caste, anti-rum, anti-sin’ institution, and as its founder said, ‘Giving an education to all colors, classes, cheap, and thorough.’

We gathered in the college’s Gray Auditorium, a fine wood-framed building in the music division. The rehearsal got going with all kinds of instruments: concert pedal harps, Irish wire-strung, double-harp (similar to the Welsh triple), Celtic harps, lap harps, as well as hammered dulcimers, and, of course, voices. The music got started incorporating styles from Irish and Scots folk tunes, old English ballads,

and a plentiful dose of Welsh song. The programme began to take shape as we were jamming together, and the concert finale revealed itself to us.

The folk that we were there to help lived artisan lives in rural Appalachia with its long history, a way of life woven from many traditions. Ron, the *Healing Hands* harper, was dressed in simple Shaker-like clothing, and we were all sharing our talents and gifts. The song we chose was an old Shaker air, *Simple Gifts*.

We planned to ‘call’ the tune, passing it between us as musicians to sing and play in our own ways. The audience would be invited to sing the chorus with us each time it would come around. The final verse would be for Neal and Mary to sing and play on their ‘sweetheart dulcimer’ in centre-stage. It was a beautiful plan, but the rehearsal was a disaster. Mary’s voice would not come out.

It is said that the Native Americans used music in their treatment of infirmity. Long before it was practiced by the white man, they depended on rhythm in any undertaking that seemed beyond human power, as a treatment of the sick. Unconsciously perhaps, we were to take our cue from this tradition.

At the appointed time, the audience gathered. The hall was as full as the collection plates that accepted donations for the storm-torn couple. It was a glorious evening of shared music and a warm sense of community. The audience loved the music. The strings pulled and plucked and struck, with voices weaving in all directions. The Welsh songs were a big hit. There was a fascination for a *penillion* tribute to the much-acclaimed Welsh dramatist and poet, Saunders Lewis, to which I performed an introduction with my found verse,

Penillion in rap time

Penillion is lots of fun.

Two melodies, played as one.

First the verse

And then the song,

And then the harpist

Plays along.

It ain’t rude -

It ain’t crude -

It’s Welsh Poetry with ATTITUDE.

The tone waned gently with the Welsh lullaby that Liz and I had arranged, where the harp switches from pedal harp to double harp to unaccompanied swooning sounds. Among the next on the programme was ‘Bugeilio’r Gwenith

Gwyn' with the steely echoes of the wire-strung harp, followed by other beloved Welsh folk music. Standing ovations rolled and all too soon it was time for our concert finale.

As we gathered on stage with instruments and verses, the music of *Simple Gifts* swirled and called,

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,*

On to,

*And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.*

On again,

*When true simplicity is gain'd,
To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,*

Calling,

To turn, turn will be our delight

Bringing it home with,

'Till by turning, turning we come round right.

The song turned to Mary and Neal and their 'sweetheart' verse, and that was when something happened. Mary's voice sang mellifluous sounds floating on the words and emotion of the night. The beauty of the round passing from voice to voice seemed to call Mary back from her dark place. The healing had happened.

*'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be...
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

It indeed embodied the musings of American musicologist, Alan Lomax who, when asked if we are what we sing, replied that the more accurate thought would be is we are how we perform. That evening in Berea, Kentucky, we as artists together with the audience performed as voices of a healing drum, bolstering the spirits of two lost souls. The voices brought them back from the grips of the twister and the *turning* came *round right*.

The next morning Mary could not stop talking, singing and smiling with everyone.

‘In days of peril and sorrow, music brings courage and comfort when speech fails,’ according to Welsh-American, Dr D E Jones. Mary had indeed proved him right, and I had shared in the experience: the healing power of song. Simple Gifts, indeed. ‘Any fool can make something complicated,’ said Woody Guthrie, the legendary folk singer, but ‘it takes a genius to make it simple’. What a wise Oklahoma-Welshman!

A Well-Tailored American

Monologue
through-composed
with a tapestry of notes of 1926

*'Tell me who you follow,
and I'll tell you who you are.'*
(André Breton)

[Daniel Protheroe, a faithful letter writer, writes home.]

Chicago i'r Ystrad

Fy annwyl frawd
Nodyn arall ar nos Sul
I ddal cysylltiad am
Ddigwyddiadau dyddiau
Galar a gogoniant,
Unigrwydd a chyfeillgarwch.
O wlad yr addewid i'r famwlad,
Ble caf ddechrau?

Dearest brother
Another note on Sunday eve
To tell again of
Daily happenings
Of grief and glory,
Loneliness and friendship.
From promised land to motherland,
Where should I begin?

*Rwy'n edrych, dros y bryniau pell,
Amdanat bob yr awr;
Tyrð, fy Anwyllyð, mae'n hwyrbau,
A'm haul bron mynd i lawr.*

gan 'Pantycelyn' ar y dôn, *Hiraeth*
gan Daniel Protheroe.

A coat, not a jacket!

[Dr Protheroe in his home studio, hovering at his writing desk which is next to a grand piano and tall music stand. A large mirror is attached to the wall above the fireplace. Dr P is double-checking his measurements with a tape measure and tailor's tape, ticking-off the numbers on his list.]

A well-tailored suit is a work of art, remember. Manners *maketh* man, I was taught, but for me it's the 'cut' of a man's suit that defines him. Has to lie just right, from the soft curves of the shoulders to pressed pleats of trousers... in this young country where image matters, looking good is akin to feeling good, and America has been very good to me...

A normal posture...that's what you need when measuring...can't do it alone...ten points to measure...five for the coat...five for the trousers...

Coat length – round the back, from nape to bottom of the seat, thirty inches, then crown to cuff – tape from shoulder to elbow to wrist, twenty-four and a half inches, then there's the half back, around the chest, and the jacket waist...over the tummy button...forty-two.

Then down to the trousers...waist, the seat – measure round the fullest part...outside leg seam, thirty-eight inches...inside leg, twenty-seven and three quarters...and the cuff, round the ankle, nine and a half inches.

There, that gives me just the right look for a short and portly gentleman of a certain age, don't you think? Well, I like to keep my shape but there's only so much a fellow can do to make up for being short, or as I like to say, *un bach byr* Welshman. Mind you, what I lack in height I make up for in stature. On the podium in front of a large chorus and orchestra, a commanding presence is all important no matter the height...collar size has been constant... fifteen and a half inches ...and my chest size is broad as I've been a singer all my life, and being an extraordinarily busy conductor, the muscles of my arms, shoulders and back are quite accentuated, though they all need to be quite supple. My leg muscles are sturdy, comes from

long hours of rehearsals...a firm foundation for grace of movement, twisting and turning with the music... though I take a short inside leg.

In shoes ... a British-size six ... don't scrimp in this area. Be good to your feet and they'll carry you a long way. Mine certainly have travelled miles, even though they are relatively small. Not easy to find sixes... well not since I emigrated... let's see, nineteen years old leaving Ystradgynlais for Scranton... not bad for a lad ... building a national...well, international... reputation as a musician in ... Milwaukee... and now in Chicago ... ah, such a magnificent city...hmm...my shoes certainly need to be good – here in the heartland of my new homeland!

And now here I am having to do my own measurements... one should never do his measurements alone... ah, not like in the old days ... lovely springtime... *Dydd Gwyl Dewi* time... my wife Hannah, used to do them with me.

.... ha! I still have the 'tailor's tape' my uncle gave me as a boy... perfect... verifies my numbers... still ... it's important to have them re-done... you never know ... though I do pride myself on staying consistent... neck, shoulders, back, chest, waist, and...but even the inseam can change I suppose...

Daughter Helen had to help me this time. ... funny, it's in the small rituals that we shared together that I truly feel my Hannah's loss. She had such a light touch...

Well, all done ... so tomorrow morning now... on the way to my Michigan Avenue studio to teach... ah, and a lovely walk it is along the Golden Mile and the shore of the Lake...beautiful --- yes, yes..... I'll mail the measurements.

No wonder I always need new shoes...I like to walk, even when it's cold... though Chicago winters are not for the 'faint of heart' and the wind ... 'chilling'... as Mam used to say, 'no scarf around the neck – catch of cold!'

Got to allow enough time for my letter to travel home *i'r Ystrad* ... I wish it didn't take so long, ...by train to the coast... and, then by ship to England, and if that's not enough... by train to Neath Valley, and from the sorting office...out by bicycle to my brother Dai, in Ystradgynlais. *Yr Ystrad*. By that time, I almost need to measure again!

Well, the important sheet of paper always arrives safely... bless him Dai for hand delivering to the tailor's shop. *Twm y tilwr* ... though he's always busy, mind... will be waiting for my measurements so he can assemble my new suits – in *baste* form of course – ready for my fitting, as soon as I arrive in July. I'll be glad to

be adjudicating at the National Eisteddfod in Swansea and see the family at the same time.

So, my shoes will be shining ... first thing my brother will say ... Do you want me to polish them?

I must look good... even though musicians in Wales are more than a little envious of my status and fame. Last summer my nephew, my brother's boy, came with me to some of the guest appearances that I did at 'the National' and even he noticed as he later told my brother, David – Dai – that he now understood *cenfigen* - jealousy - having seen the behavior. It doesn't faze me a bit though...it's *gwenwyn*, poison, and I won't have it poison my blood – my life here is too good for that, and the family in the *Ystrad* would be upset if they thought it hurt me.

Now then, I know I'm fastidious about the cut of the cloth... suit must be in balance, after all – and the adjustments made to the back and front lengths must be in harmony with the posture of my body... It's meticulous work, like being a composer crafting a brand-new piece of music... I confess that sometimes I'm in too much of a hurry to always be accurate... ah, well I know what my critics say ... 'He publishes too much but does not edit enough'... but life is in overflow, though one of these days I might just...

Ah, the suits though... they must be right for my work... not many will understand, but if you're facing an audience... and your backside in full view too ... conducting large performances and rehearsals, ... I once remember.... well, realised after a performance ...it could have been embarrassing had that seam unraveled any more.... I have to be comfortable in my clothes to do my work well – to give it my all.

The weave... nothing like British wool, that's what holds them up so well...the suit ... high quality and they endure well... Twm *tikwr* sets me right for my work in America, as a proud Cambro-American musician.

Now then...I've ordered a special coat in this summer's suits order: A set of dark weave tails, with two white high collar shirts... arms to my measurements... bow tie, waistcoat, trousers with seam on the outside, white *braces* – not *suspenders* ... as they call them here in America. It must all be well proportioned for a conductor of national and international repute.

Then, it's all accentuated by a custom-made pocket square from one of my Hannah's finest white silk handkerchiefs. She'll be next to my heart.

In my hand, the baton presented to me in Scranton.

And now I'll be ready for Philadelphia... in December ...such a big event. That's where I'll have the honour of conducting a concert in the city where it all happened 150 years ago - the birth of a nation. America. And the place where the Declaration of Independence was signed.

The occasion?

The sesquicentennial!

The mammoth closing concert...a finale...to the year of celebrations marking our country's 150th birthday – and independence from the Crown. The American Association of Glee Clubs invited me to conduct a choir of over three thousand male voices, the largest male chorus yet known, drawn from the length of the eastern States ... several coming from Pennsylvania, ... how can I ever forget the state that welcomed me here from Wales in 1886...and there'll also be a fine orchestra, all happening in the Sesquicentennial Auditorium. In the papers they said,

'to the little Welsh race was given the honor of furnishing the guest conductor for this remarkable male chorus. ... a tribute to the prominent part of Welsh compatriots in the establishment of an independent government as expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.'

I can see the sounds in my mind, swirling - the mighty majesty of national pride, full of soul, sung with the grit and power of...trained and disciplined voices... the rumbled vibrations of voices under my feet on the podium...a rousing rendition indeed...and so for that, the coat must be just right. Even after forty years in America, it's still a coat for me. Not a *jacket* - that's what they call it here. Potatoes have jackets, not conductors.

A musician bespoke
(on tailoring terms)

On the board of high pedigree,
No *Bushelman* or *codger* me.
Baste, to try it out for size.
Harmony of posture – *Balance*.

Spare the *boot*?
Kicking around, no.
Land of opportunity for
Master Mason of tunes tempo rubato.

Clapham Junction canvas weave to
Interlining strong songs
made-to-measure in
perfection proud Cambro-American.

Whipping the cat of
communities continent wide.
Kansas last night,
a ditty 'EMPORIA' -
Today's sound seam *pigged*.

Savile Row Tailoring Terms

- **Balance** – adjustment of back and front lengths of a jacket to harmonise with the posture of a particular figure
- **Baste** – garment roughly assembled for first fitting.
- **Bespoke** – a suit made on or around Savile Row, bespoke to the customer's specifications. A bespoke suit is cut by an individual and made by highly skilled individual craftsmen. The pattern is made specifically for the customer and the finished suit will take a minimum of fifty hours of hand work and require a series of fittings.
- **Board** – tailor's workbench.
- **Boot** – loan until payday. Can you spare the boot? Can you give me a loan? Dates from crossed-leg days, when a tailor recorded the loan by chalking it on the sole of his boot.
- **Bushelman** – journeyman who alters or repairs.
- **Canvas** – a cloth usually made from cotton, flax, hemp or jute and used for providing strength or firmness.
- **Clapham Junction** – a paper design draft with numerous alterations or additions.
- **Codger** – tailor who does up old suits.
- **Have you been on the board?** – are you experienced?
- **Interlining** – material positioned between lining and outer fabric to provide bulk or warmth.
- **Kicking** – looking for another job.
- **Made-to-measure** – garment made to a customer's individual requirements, to some extent, but not necessarily by hand
- **Pigged** – a lapel which turns up after some wear.
- **Whipping the cat** – travelling round and working in private houses: common practice in old days when a tailor would be given board and lodging while he made clothes for a family and their servants.

Advertisement

Daniel Protheroe
Teacher of conducting,
singing and composition
300 Fine Arts Bldg.
Chicago

The Musical Leader
Summer 1926

Beat time, don't let time beat you!

[Dr Daniel Protheroe is in his downtown studio at the Fine Arts Building on Chicago's Michigan Avenue. He is standing on a box in front of a long body-length mirror. In his hand is a conducting baton. *Dr Dan* has removed his suit coat and is in his white shirt sleeves and tie with a buttoned-up waistcoat. His black laced-up shoes have a military-like shine to them. He is demonstrating posture and movement for singing and conducting. An aspiring young conductor is taking notes.]

'It's important that the art of choral conducting be studied carefully in its many phases. I grant, no amount of study can "make a conductor" – yet even a heaven-born talent must be cultivated, and the art of beating time be studied'...

Yes, that's a good way to open a presentation...authoritative and insightful...leadership skills...now, pay attention -

At the first breath, that's where it begins, through the mouth, as well as the nostrils – it's deeper that way and they can see your motion. Good posture, that's essential...it's a whole-body experience...stand upright, but not stiff. Feet well planted...but don't lock the knees. Shoulders broad but don't arch the back...There's a lot to think about...so empty your mind of other things before your start.

Did you get that?

My baton... as I inhale, it moves with my breath ... just like this. Nice and even at first whether slowly or quickly, depending on the speed of my breath intake. A quick breath means the tempo is going to be fast. Do you see? And it keeps going from there...the gesture may be broad and fluid and even – or, if needed, more staccato, cutting or jumpy, but whatever I do, that's how the pulse of the music flows.... and then, when the chorus enters, that's when breath and baton make a real difference!

Fourteen inches...that's the length baton that I prefer...white with a rosewood bulb. Sixteen inches when there's a big crowd...for example, when I'm conducting a big chorus or a *cymanfa ganu* ...that way I can be sure that everyone can see me - my ictus - the takt - the pulse of my baton, if you will – my rhythmic

gesture. Do you understand? It's so that we all sing together by being clear in what I'm asking of them.

Are you with me?

Practice in front of a mirror...it's important to see what you look like to them...to a choir, or an orchestra. You see, whatever the gesture the choir sees you doing...that's the nature of the sound you'll get back from them... 'what they see is what you get'. Put it this way, if you're agitated, then the sound will be jagged... if you're confident and relaxed that's the sound you'll hear – fluid and even...and so forth... If there's something not sounding right... it's usually the way they're seeing me...or the conductor on the podium...

Bit perplexed?

Right, now then. Let's try a different way of saying this...let me give you an example. Last month I was conducting a *cymanfa ganu* in Scranton, Pennsylvania...you know, a big hymn festival where everyone sings...in four parts, mind you...not a concert, of course. Much harder really...you can't plan for what happens...We were in the Scranton Armory on Adams...in the drill hall... it's a huge cavernous place, it needed to be.... they're very popular... there were six thousand singers ...and I was conducting all of them. Can you imagine the sound that would make? SATB of course - soprano, alto, tenor and bass. Mind you, there were two sessions...one in the afternoon and the other in the evening... it was beastly hot...but they sang sixteen hymns in both sessions...mostly in Welsh.

The Armory's an echoing place, so unless I was clear and definite with my arm gestures - we'd have a collision of chords in no time. And then there's the organist with his mighty instrument, and the time delay, the echo... It was an absolutely magnificent event...all because I could 'speak' with my baton, my gestures and my energy.

Wrote a new hymn tune for the occasion ... called it 'Hannah' – it strikes me as unassumingly supportive and plain speaking – that's how she was... they've decided to include her, 'Hannah' in next year's American National Eisteddfod *cymanfa ganu* - a 'National Memorial Hymn'. My Hannah... laid her to rest in the family grave, in Dunmore, near Scranton in the Forest Hill Cemetery. A simple, elegant stone...no frills. That's what I told the stonemason. 'Hannah H. Protheroe', that's all it needs say, *haf fy nghalon* to me. She's always with me...she's the summer of my heart. They played my hymn, 'Milwaukee'. Hannah always said that's the one she'd like to have...when the time came...oh, dear ... Open the window, would you? It's very

hot in here. I'm still not used to Chicago summer humidity...been nearly twenty years. There should be a cooler breeze from the lake at this time of night... Hm... are you ready to go on? Much better with that breeze through here...though the city's noisy...fireworks for the 4th maybe...anyway, where was I?

Ah yes, conducting is a very physical activity, though I like to say that it's for a spiritual purpose. It pushes away my own stresses. I need to clear my head before rehearsal begins ... run a few drills for myself...make sure that I include everyone...so that my beat is not unbalanced... uneven...unrhythmic, maybe ... easy to follow... inclusive of everyone... even the people sitting on the edges of my beat. They have to be brought along also. No stragglers.

Write this down – 'be as flexible as possible'. Try to avoid mechanical, metronomic-like beats.... or you might as well have the little instrument 'tick the beats'!

Con spirare – from the Latin, to breathe together. That's the key phrase. Remember it. When a choir and I come together to sing... that first breath... that's the one we must take together... it's essential... it's full of focus, intention and emotion... coming together, that's what we're doing... together to make beautiful music...a simply glorious sound. It's why we sing... or why we sing with other people, don't you think?

And then there's the question of selecting the appropriate repertoire for your group.

I've established a new choir this year.... well, I'm already conducting ten or more choirs, between Chicago and Milwaukee...children, women, mixed voice...but I've wanted to do this one for a long time: to establish a truly Welsh American choir...MALE voices only....and only those in Chicago from Wales, or of Welsh descent. They have to be able to sing in Welsh with no other voice timbers included... We had our first concert last month – it was at the beautiful Orchestra Hall, a few blocks up from here – the acoustics are simply divine – we sang songs of Wales, many of my own compositions and some of my teachers and contemporaries. Many a march of mine...the boys worked hard... I've got the programme here... the Tribune reviewers said, 'Welsh Choir strikes Peak of Song Perfection'. ... I've also

written a review in Welsh for the Cambro papers – that’s the other essential part for a working musician...he must do his own public relations – remember now.

Oh, I forgot to tell you the name...the Chicago Welsh Male Voice Choir...we’ve started broadcasting regularly, live on the radio. WGN...it goes from coast to coast.... there was a ‘letter to the editor’ the other day, from...from out west...in Welsh...you won’t understand this but I’ll....just listen...

Cymry ar y radio (the Welsh on the radio)

Diolchwn i Dr. Daniel Protheroe a’i gôr yn Chicago

am ganu mor fynych ar y radio.

Rhodiant bodlonrwydd neillduol i Gymry y wlad,

fel y gwelir yn sylwadau o werthfawrogiad â ymddengys yn y Drych.

Dylud hysbysu bob amser y bydd Dr. Protheroe a’i gôr yn myned i ganu.

Awgryma gwaith y doctor i ni pa

fuddioldeb a ddeuai pe gwna pob Cymro o dalent

ymdrech i sarad neu ganu pob cynygiad a geir.

(Talks about my Welsh choir’s broadcasts on the radio and how much the people from Wales in America appreciate the efforts of talented Welshmen, like myself, who speak and sing, in Welsh of course, at every opportunity.)

Mae y radio am fod yn ddyfais o

bwysigrwydd mawr i wareiddiad,

ac ni ddylid esgeulwso ei manteision.

(Radio...a very important invention for civilization...its benefits should not be neglected.)

The radio is such a marvel...you just never know how you’re touching your audience when you sing in a choir...and with radio...well, it’s a mechanical marvel... not perfect, but it’s alive... pulsing, you could say, with the very breath of a living person performing before the microphone. And what’s good for a working musician, like myself, is that when a radio audience has heard ‘masters’ over the airwaves, they usually look for good teachers, locally. I assume that’s why you’re here... constant advertisement in the ‘Musical Leader’ for my teaching studio here in the Fine Arts Building and the Sherman Conservatoire. That’s a little tip for you in future.

Chicago is a wonder city, don't you think? ... been here since before the Great War...I know it gets a bad rap sometimes, what with there being gangsters here – Al Capone, and his mob – and then there's the vagaries of the Mayor (William Emmett Dever) ...he's a *wet*... I'm not! ...I'm ... honestly, heartily and thoroughly ... in favour of the eighteenth amendment...totally agree. Read it for yourself... the eighteenth. I like to keep a copy of the U.S. Constitution in my coat pocket...that way, I carry it with me always... Here it is...fifteenth, sixteenth...here, the eighteenth...

'the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.'

Prohibition, yes. I wonder if you drink, but I have been a teetotaler all my life, since my youth in *Ystrad*...my uncle, Thomas Williams, was *pen blaenor* at hen gapel Cwmgiedd...the deacon drilled it into me, he did...Anyway, you can't sing those great temperance hymns and not be a part of the Movement.

Prohibition - an admirable regime to my mind - not only from the spiritual and moral standpoint but from the economic point of view. I've seen too much of how dependence on *y ddiiod feddwol* as we say in Welsh, wicked intoxication, has ruined many a working man and his family.

Don't write this down, but even my cousin, Dai Thomas, he worked in the mines near Ystradgynlais...as they all did. It's hard work. After his shift, Dai would go straight to the drink...*y ddiiod feddwol* ... and of course he was thirsty from the dust...and before he knew what was happening...he was a drunkard...he worked, drank and ...well, he was a bad husband...hit her...and neglected the children...Dr Parry wrote a song, *Gweddi Gwraig y Meddwyn*, prayer of the drunkard's wife or something like that...got a copy somewhere...it's a glee...the fiend – the drink - was defeated by the power of the wife's prayer. He sang it a lot. It was one of his early songs!

That's enough of my own thoughts...

Now then, the baton is held in the right hand...like so.... that's the same hand and arm that's raised to swear the Pledge of Allegiance to this great country.

Proudly, that's how I do it...and with confidence...the same way to hold the baton...loosely, but with confidence...the stick... must all be balanced in your hand.

Keep going!

Start out with a basic grip of the baton...bend the thumb to meet the first finger...palm of the left hand to the floor...and your pinkie to be relaxed...And then if you want your baton to convey a delicate touch, move to a lighter grip ... cup the heel of the stick – the ball, I like to use one with a pear-like shape, take the thumb to meet the second finger (middle finger) while the first finger relaxes on the top....the right hand is always busy....keep the wrist unstrained...don't tense up...but there's got to be enough tension to be effective.

Tension, there's such a thing as good tension, you know. By the way, I liked that melody you wrote for me, and the countermelody weaved well. The tension and the release ... good ... very effective. You're German, aren't you? Yes, of course, American...

Been an American citizen since 1893...and proud to be ... been here almost forty years... had enormous opportunities...it's home, and my family's home...my children were born here – Daniel Jr, Helen and Anne. I've travelled all over the country...conducting, adjudicating, ...making America musical, you could say...but there is always some measure of *hiraeth* for the homeland. A longing, maybe...some tension...but it helps me appreciate what I have here.

Relax your arm, take a brief break...don't want you to get stiff in your gestures.

Did I tell you about Seattle? I was there the other week. Now that's a beautiful part of the country for you. Natural beauty and opportunities. The Welsh pastor out there introduced me to an Indian chief...what a fine fellow, the Chief...from the Snohomish tribe...interesting ways they've got ... he was telling me about their story poles....and just like that, out of nowhere, he said to me, 'You have lost someone close to you, recently'. It stopped me in my tracks. I thought I

was doing very well in coping...not showing my feelings. Then he got me again when he said, 'There's no such thing as death, just a change of worlds.'

A nice thought ...heaven...hmm...don't know what made me think of that...now where was I ...oh yes, being home... suppose home is here for you now... this is a great country... and am a proud citizen ...but it does make me happy to go back to Wales, it's a little nearer to heaven. More than any other place. Just yesterday I had a letter from my brother, Dai, ...in Welsh...every week from home. He never misses. Though I think that as far as the Welsh language is concerned, we are very loyal ... to our *mamiath*, here in the States. It's not easy. We have to work hard at keeping our mother tongue. Every day, I write in my journal in Welsh...and before bed, my prayers, *fy mhader yn y Gymraeg*... 'Gorau Cymro, Cymro oddi cartref' the old saying goes. Best Welshman is the one away from home. That's me, I'd say.

Nawr 'te ... why not, for next week compose a prayer for me. Something before retiring? A German chorale, maybe...fourteen or sixteen measures, okay ...and try to include a suspension.

Now then, some more notes for you to take -

A good conductor should have 'a thorough musical understanding' of the work being undertaken...that's an obvious one...but the three main body parts to work are...

The ear

The eye

The arm

The ear to judge the singing, to give emphasis to the chordal foundation and, of course, to detect mistakes.

The eye must watch and inspire the singers. Make eye contact with your singers at all times...if you don't look at them, they won't look at you, and then it would be a mess!

The arm must beat the time - the pulse - and indicate the rhythmic beats. But don't be stiff – remember to be pliable, but within reason. Keep a definite and clear rhythmic beat, not everyone that's watching you will be an experienced player or singer. Don't swim with your beat or go around in circles. Let me put it this way, 'Beat time but do not let time beat you!'

The conductor's mind must always project ahead – whatever we want the singers to do, let them know in time for them to react. That's a very important one. Let's talk about how to ask a chorus to breathe in long phrases...as when you want a long phrase to be sustained...with no audible breaks. Well, what you do is request 'staggered' breathing. How to do that? Tell your singers not to breathe together...but rather each person catches a quick one...a breath...and ideally on or after a strong beat...not before one!

It will ...in that way... all sound as one seamless stream of sound that can go on and on for eternity...

Right-o, we'll stop there now...best you go home before ...ah, your train...just in case things get a bit unruly around here ...there was a shooting on South Michigan the other night...an ambush...it's almost dark now...see you next time...take the L...I'll be leaving myself soon.

[Student leaves.]

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Lan yr Ystrad... ah, there in a few weeks... Wales...home...I'll be *wncwl* Danny...not Dr Protheroe...hope he didn't hear the crack in my voice when I talked about Hannah...

Cymru...been a year since I was last there ...Hannah was with me then ...

Hannah...can't seem to find my rhythm without her. Work on, they said. Use the discipline of music-making, but I'm like an unbalanced beat without her. It's the finality of it...I keep wanting to talk to her ...ask her about things. Symptoms? Certainly, there were plenty. They were fraying - the strings of her harp, fraying they were...I didn't know how to pray or what for...release for her... but what

about me...it was a terrible shock when she passed. ... I wasn't with her...that's what eats at me. On a tour... left her with our church friends. Nothing I could have done, he said... doctor...but I wasn't with her...couldn't watch with her. She was in Milwaukee... I was so sure it wasn't the time...but then it was...and I wasn't there... next to her...it was quick...but she must have been afraid...minutes, they said...but I only needed one...to tell her of my love...tell her to wait for me...that I'd be following...not to be afraid...she was alone, when she passed...and I wasn't there... in Ohio I was ...she was only fifty-seven...

Edau brau yw bywyd ... yn wir ...Welsh flows through me when I'm churned up...in my sadness...fy nghalar...fy hiraeth...turn into notes of grief...thread of life is fragile indeed.

Lots of nice letters came from all over ... condolences...the United States, Canada, Wales ... answered nearly all of them... just a note left to write...so much easier in Welsh...one 'home' to Scranton now ...*er cof annwyl amdani...*

Gyfeillion,

Diolch i chi am eich cydymdeimlad tyner yn sgil ein tralloð mawr. Anodd ydyw deall y drefn, ond gwn y daw diwrnod y bydd 'troion yr yrfa' wedi troi i felysu ein bryð, ac y cawn help y Diðdanyðð i gario ein croes....Rwyf innau yn iawn o ran iechyð, ond unig iawn heb fy annwlyð.

(Friends, Thanks indeed for your gentle sympathies in the wake of our great loss...difficult to comprehend but with faith, sweet help will carry our load... I am healthy...but so lonely without my dearest.)

Thirty-four years we were married. Not long enough. Even in all life's busyness...so lonely without her...*unigrwydd hollol...*It's easier for me to write in words...not music...in words...not to speak about her loss...it's not the Welsh way to talk about sorrow...my faith is strong...but the longing...a few verses, now... *galargan...*of a sorts...an eulogy to my Hannah...we Welsh are not good in talking about death.

A Dream

My soul went dreaming from star to star,
And stood on the outermost sea-washed bar
Of the world of things and cares and men.
My sweet, did you say: 'He forgot me, then?'

My soul saw Faith with a girdle bright
Add star to star to her warm light
And sing in that pure, inviolate air.
Say, dear, did you think I forgot you there?

My soul saw Truth sail out on the deep
Beyond the untracked realms of sleep;
And I was alone in that solemn place.
Say, love, did you fear I forgot your face?

My soul saw Love in the rippling shine
Afloat in a ship, and I cried: 'O mine!'
And the voice came back: 'I am thine: rejoice!'
Come close, could you dream I forgot your voice?

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Faith, Truth and Love – I knew them there
On that limitless edge of the otherwhere:
By your own dear name, I knew them all,
And you answered at once my heart's old call.

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Love is warm sunlight – more than sunlight yet
'Tis light adrift within a morn of dew;
'Tis light and warmth within a seed's embrace,
Then light at rest within a rose's face.

Love is true music – more than music, too.
'Tis music singing all the bosom through'
'Tis tune and poem in a life's full round, -
An antiphon – sound answering sweet sound.*

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* (Unattributed: From the Daniel Protheroe Collection, NLW Aberystwyth)

Talk to her, my friend said. She'll hear you. So, I talk...and share...tell her of my day...my journeys...my work...the children... Helen, Danny and Ann...the grandchildren...it helps.... *gyda'r golled*....but it's not the same...the loss...

Helen...she looks so much like her mother... but she has my temperament... high energy with a fine soprano, she is...Not as easy for her now that she's a married lady herself...Mrs. Axtell.... but...she was in the house...with her mother...when it happened...

[Music cue: 'Peace I leave with you' for alto and chorus]

Helen's coming with me to Wales ...she'll sing the *Messiah* for the Eisteddfod.

And Twm *tilwr*, as always, will have my new suits ready for me when I arrive... in Cwmgiedd, he is... where my *wncwyl* lived...it's good to have routine...

Ha! ... and I've bought a 'Panama' for the Eisteddfod... imagine?... an *Optimo*... from Marshall Field – my favourite Chicago department store ... a fine store... it might be sunny in Wales.... might get lucky... certain to be the only one wearing a 'Panama' in the Valley... bound to be cooler than our Chicago summer.

A Panama's an interesting item...it's all about the weave and the straw. Best straw comes from Ecuador, and the hat is woven from the centre out...layer upon layer...all tightly bound together...much like a choir...or a family. Hannah was the centre of mine. Well then...

Hat size... seven and three eighths in British hats...that's a seven and a half American...I'm a short man, but I have a large head...not that I'm big-headed mind. Ha!

Listen... 'When we lose the right to be different, we lose the privilege to be free.' That's what my friend, Charles Evans Hughes says, ...and I'm exercising my right to both...Fine fellow, Hughes, he'll be a Justice of the United States Supreme

Court one day, I'm sure...maybe even a Chief Justice... just missed being elected President...C. E. Hughes...though I voted for him... losing to Woodrow Wilson by only 23 electoral votes out of a total of 531. Shame, Welsh minister's son too. He wrote a marvelous letter of endorsement on my behalf. Actually, I'm quite humbled to think that his signature sealed such a powerful petition... instigated earlier this year, it was ... by a Pennsylvania Welshman, and a Library of Congress director. A petition... with signatories of the most important and influential Welsh-Americans in almost each of the States. Dai Bach...that's the fellow in Washington... sent him all my compositions for US copyright... said that he and *Daralaw* wanted to be sure that my tremendous contribution to Welsh music and the Welsh-American community was properly recognized by the University of Wales... by their awarding me an Honorary Doctorate.

Can't put a price on that kind of support though, can you? Immigrant for immigrant...recognising another's efforts.

How could the University refuse me? That's what they all said...hasn't come through yet ... the doctorate...maybe this summer in Wales...well, we'll see...they're a jealous bunch though...those musicians back home...got a letter from a publisher over there the other day...said that my 'music is much more popular in Wales than the music of any other living Welsh composer'... *Gan dy well cei dy barchu, gan dy waeth cei dy famu*. Ha! What a saying, how would that be in English – as the old verse says – by your peers will you be respected, by your inferiors you'll be judged. Hm...scans better in Welsh, more lyrical.

America for many is just the land of the dollar...but I think that America will soon be known as the land of music. People will be surprised to see the interest taken in all the arts here...music's been fostered here for years ... been my career since I arrived back in '88 – couldn't have done that in Wales and raised a family...and bought a house in downtown Chicago... worth \$20,000.

Ah America, folk song is the foundation of music.... Fortunately, Wales has plenty for me to add to the mix! Written some new arrangements ... folk songs... and some spirituals... I think they'll be popular with male voice choirs...they've been published here in Chicago...in the Loop...have a listen to this one...for male chorus...told it's enchanting... 'In the sweet by and by' ...to Welsh words by Ieuan Gwyllt...

Perhaps I'm 'old school'.... you could say...I can appreciate the new...but 'modernism' is not my style...strange harmonies and ridiculous intervals...to my mind...that's all head and no heart...that's not how I operate...emotional, that's what I am...I want to thrill and arouse...

Chicago...where better place to be... it's booming here, musically. There's all kinds... jazz and ragtime and popular song ...opera and orchestral...sacred ...and I can be both an American musician and a Welsh musician here...there's room for both.

Day off tomorrow...Federal Holiday to celebrate July 4th... Independence Day ...chapel picnic in the afternoon...Hebron Welsh Chapel Methodists v. Sardis Welsh Chapel... Methodists against Congregationalists.... playing baseball...it's all about the balance... balance and blend...the Big Bs...just like a good piece of music...

Time to go home now, Hannah *nghariad i – amser mynd sia thre.*

On board
S.S. OLYMPIC

August 15, 1926

Fy Annwyl Gyfaill:

Here we are looking forward to seeing land on the morrow after a most enjoyable ocean trip. We were fortunate to have splendid weather that helped to make my visit enjoyable. The unfortunate grief of loss was a blight, but it did not affect things healing as much as expected. Taking it altogether, it was better than any of my previous visits. The people from the youngest, dressed better; their behavior was courteous and, spiritually, I believe things were on a higher plane. The Eisteddfod was a huge success – the attendance being a record one. The Eisteddfod Pavilion was the best I have ever seen – it was artistic, and excellent acoustically. The arrangements were splendid and made the gathering one long to be remembered. The ‘overseas visitors’ had a great reception – the Cleveland Choir having a thunderous greeting on their appearance in the male voice competition. The Eisteddfod Choir was a wonderful body of voices, but (rhwng cronfachau, ac yn ddistaw bach) much more could have been gotten out of such an excellent organ.

I am writing an article to the Darian – in Welsh – and if you would care to have it – I can write an English one for you along with some lines. Let me know your words. Re: the Degree – it did not come up this year. According to Dr. David Evans it was too late, but I found out that it was considered – and easily cleared the first stage – but it was stopped at the second – through the ‘jealousy’ of the musical brethren. When I see you, I shall tell you the whole story. For the present, it is best to keep it quiet – as the petition is to be presented again. I learned that some cases have been considered here...four years in succession. Felly nid oes ond gobeithio y daw pethau oddidraw heb fod yn hir. (To be hoped that something will come from ‘across the pond’ soon.)

Cofion cynnes atoch ac at barwb,

Fel arfer -

Daniel Protheroe

Daniel Protheroe
5000 Dorchester Avenue
Chicago

November 21, 1926

Fy Annwyl Gyfaill:

I shall spend Friday evening next in Scranton – on my way to Philadelphia where I am to conduct the Associated Glee Clubs in their concert at the Sesqui on Saturday night. A ydych yn dod yno? Yr wyf yn edrych ymlaen at yr wyl fawr a chanu godidog. If you are not too busy Friday night – could we not get a little sgwrs? – I shall stay at Mrs. Connello – arriving there by the 3:30 train Friday afternoon.

Gyda chofion pur a chynnes –

Fel arfer,

Daniel Protheroe

All in evening clothes: Sunday, November 28th, 1926

[Found poem, accounts of a concert]

All in evening clothes
a spectacle delight to the eye.
Conductor commands,
3,000 men, as one, stand.
Order to sing is given,
every eye on man with baton,
expression enough
to draw thought of song.

Maestro moulded
full three thousand as one voice.
Smoothly as quartet only.
Tenor bells,
Bass a large diapason note.
In unison 'twas as heavens opened.
No massed singing ever heard to such effect,
Ringing in the ears for years.
Vast audience, small wonder, shed tears.

'Amen', evening's climax
Never heard again in this world
At close audience to its feet.
Regardless of race or country,
doubtful if such an inspiring occasion
ever heard again.
Some-time before
thrill excelled.

'Conductors are born, not made!'
say some.
Dr Protheroe was born to
give new birth and grace
to those who sang
under him on this earth.

Daniel Protheroe
5000 Dorchester Avenue
Chicago

Tachwedd 30, 1926

Fy Annwyl Gyfaill,

At the time of writing I am traveling by train home to Chicago after a magnificent visit to Philadelphia. It was so good to see you there, my friend. I hope you enjoyed the concert as much as it was gratifying to conduct such a fine body of singers. (Three thousand voices.) It was indeed an honor to be the finale concert of such a landmark occasion. The sesquicentennial celebration of signing of the Declaration of Independence – as you are well aware, one of the three essential documents of our chosen homeland. And even more so to be celebrating in the city where our Founders signed it and the home of the first Cambro society in America, the Welsh Society of America. The audience seemed most appreciative of our efforts. The President of the American Society of Glee Clubs wanted me to thank you for your support in gathering such a fine contingent of male choral singers from Pennsylvania. Our boys were a fine core for the others from New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Toronto. Fifty-eight choirs in total, I think. I felt the rumbled vibrations of voices under my feet on the podium – a rousing rendition. My Hannah's spirit was with me, indeed.

By separate cover, I am sending you a copy of my 1926 Christmas carol. I drafted it whilst traveling on the train. Let me know your thoughts. I will arrange it for my mixed choir at the Central Church, and of course it will be the focus of this year's version of my annual Christmas card.

I look forward to reading your review of the Sesqui.

Cofion cynnes atoch.

Daniel Protheroe

Decorating a Christmas Carol

With the Christmas greetings of Daniel Protheroe 1926

[DP is alone in his home painting studio. He is cleaning his brushes after completing a painting. The work is drying on the easel. Here we see a sixty-year-old man reflecting on the creative process and the events of a difficult year. It is Sunday evening, December 5th.]

It wasn't my intention to send cards this year. Somehow, it didn't seem fitting ... ever since my Hannah died in February ... and it's been non-stop, keeping busy. Maybe that's a good thing ... work's a great healer for grief, they say. Of course, I'm grateful for it all, and I've certainly worked hard for it. And Christmas is always busy. All of my choirs have concerts, all ten of them. *Messiahs* galore, my students and their recitals, and then there's the Central Church Chicago choir, which is immense ... fills the Auditorium Theatre, along with a capacity congregation ... thanks to Dr Gunsaulus. Then there are the children's choruses in Milwaukee and in Chicago ... over four hundred singers between them, and that's just the juniors. All of those parents and families make for a sizeable audience every time at Orchestra Hall. Of course, without a knowledgeable and appreciative audience there's no artistry!

The church, teaching classes, and the live WGN radio broadcast going out from coast to coast. The pace doesn't slow down for a musician until after Christmas, especially with the big music ministry. Thankfully, I've got my routine, and the work gets done. Always. It's a must.

Somehow though, I just didn't have the *hwyyl* when it came to the cards. The spirit wasn't there. Of course, I had to compose the annual carol as always, and write the words for church, they nearly always flow ... gets me excited ... the adrenaline of creativity, although it does leave me exhausted at its end, but it's worth it ... such a sense of accomplishment. Where do you get your inspiration, people ask? It's all around me, I tell them. You just have to pay attention, and sometimes it just seeps in. ...and music matters ... I'm making American music for American audiences ... got high calibre people around me at School, the Sherwood School of Music, and my students keep me on my toes...and there's the music of Wales and the folk songs... wherever the inspiration comes from, when I'm writing, I'm never alone.

Things almost didn't come together ... I was struggling. Strange how in times of crisis ... words come in Welsh, then I turn them into English. Well, maybe it's not so strange really, my mother tongue, *dod o'r galon*, the simple words of my heart:

*Ar noson dawel llond o sêr,
Uwch peithiau Bethlehem dref
Engyl ganant yn gytun
Dros gorlan Mab y Dyn.*

'On a still and starry night.
O'er the plains of Bethlehem old
Rang the song of angels bright
Clearly o'er the shepherd's fold.' *

Likewise, the tune is simple, modal almost. It seems to follow the words and the message of Christmas. The light of the Star that has guided me through the year ... through the dark days of loss and loneliness.

My Christmas card was difficult this year, but when the music won't come, I have to find other ways to be productive, or maybe it's more like turning everything off ... I've always loved to paint and draw pictures ... quite a few on the walls in the house. Not worth much, but they're precious to me ah, I'll need to clean these brushes before they're ruined ... had them a long time ... *take care of your tools*, my *wncwl* drummed that into me as a boy ... and it stuck.

The sketch came to me on the train. It's such a long journey back to Chicago from Philly, and I can never sleep, however tired I am ... I was drafting and sketching using page after page of my notebook ... Rubbish! ... I was very restless ... not like me ... The light was very dim in my sleeper compartment, dark almost except for a small gas light ... and then ... in a moment, in the early morning, it happened ... revealed itself ... light seeped through the crack in the window blind ... seemed as a solitary ray in the darkness ... my darkness. That was it ... the key... was the light, or rather the light in the dark ... the balance of the dark and the bright. ... with the strands as notes, each with its tones.

* English words from Daniel Protheroe 1927 Christmas carol. Welsh translation by M Morgan.

Isn't that how life is? How we treat the darkness? How to find the resilience to carry on - to muddle through? I think there's a connection between art and life in the treatment of the dark and the light. We shade the contrasts. That's what came to my mind - *chiaroscuro* ... the treatment of light and dark in a painting, and it has to be just right to have harmony in the finished work.

No wonder when I got home from the train, I came straight up here to my studio ... a box room really, but the skylight helps ... absolutely quiet up here. No music-making here, except for what's in my head, and that's almost always there!

I put the canvas with the underpainting on the easel and started mixing my palette of colours...yellows and reds to find just the right hue of orange, blues mixed with yellows for greens, and white to lighten things up. Ready to apply layers of colours onto the canvas.

My mind whirrs differently here. The smell of the linseed oil, the binder, always brings me into a creative mood. Painting is a more relaxed outlet for me, with fewer pressures or expectations. The tools are always waiting for me - pigments, the brushes, the canvas, the strokes ... I try to make note of the colour combination, but I get carried away and rarely make the same hue twice.

Then the painting comes to life ... the firm brush strokes define the long, solitary candle with its short wick. I need warmth and light for the golden glow against the dark background: whites, reds and yellows for the flame flickering hot in the contrasting darkness. The light revealing the way. I choose warm colours ... dabs of Cadmium orange for the glow with a blush of Alizarin crimson, and then Cadmium yellow deep for the candle's body ... might all look too much at first, but it'll dry lighter. Almost like grief, overwhelming ... then ... becomes part of life, humming quietly in the background.

The candle drips its effort down the sides – the mid-tone of the painting, the dominant chord, if you like on its way to its resolution. All the while I'm checking to see how the colours are blending for the translucent light. More linseed oil, a fresh brush and smaller strokes for the flick of the green hue holly at the base using techniques I learned at the Chicago Institute of Art. It's in the minimal touch of the stroke that I get the three-dimensional effect of the flame. It is magical.

Hours flew by and I wasn't weary anymore. The painting was simply evolving and all the while, though I didn't know it, the carol was writing itself in my head. Words and music. Synaesthesia, some would say, hearing colours and forms as sounds ... not sure really, but what I do know is that I was pouring my energy into the work. It was cascading. Hannah used to say that I had to have a special

space for painting. She insisted on it! She'd say that I made such a mess with the oils. Funny really. It's the only place where I'm not in order. Just playing. Creating. *Dod i'm coed*. Getting myself out of a messy spot in my head. A totally private place to find my own light.

She was it too ... Hannah ... she was the light of my life.

*Ffydd...*of course, I have my faith. I say my prayers and write the hymns and conduct the services and *cymanfaoedd canu* – all with my complete dedication. I share my faith with others, and they tell me what they think of it. In fact, a minister from Milwaukee wrote a review about me the other day after a *cymanfa ganu* I directed at Thanksgiving. I've got the cutting ... how can I not love the words... *when leading the great Hymn Singing services in Immanuel Church, Dr Protheroe voiced his personal faith with a fervour of earnestness that inspired us to sing the Gospel messages with increased enthusiasm because of the deep spiritual interpretation he gave them out of his personal experience.*

He's right ... my faith is what inspires my resilience - my faith - to keep moving on, despite the grief ... to continue to live my life. It's not the same as before, and there are dark days, or at least shades of grey, but it's still a life to be lived fully. Sharing the joys and the sorrows with others makes me realise that we all have grief in our lives.

It feels a bit like a 'suspension' in music when written in harmony. The sweet tone of pain...of loss...my Hannah is always with me...but there's a resolution...a coming to terms...an acceptance, if you will. It's a bit like the sound of a suspension in music theory, as I tell my students, *the Suspension is a note retained from the preceding chord, which is foreign to the chord in which it is used...Its name comes from the fact that it holds in suspension the tone which, properly belongs to the chord which it has displaced. ... the resolution into the proper chord tone must follow and satisfy the demand of the ear for concord.*

Ah, this will make a fine Christmas card, I think: a new carol with its words and music on one side and my painting on the other. The flame of the candle burning bright in the middle while flickering into the darkness of the edges... the energy radiating out as the wax runs down the sides...yes, I think that will work.

Not as intricate as my previous cards but it pleases me. A simple carol with a clear message will say it well. Good.

There, the brushes are clean now ready to be stored in jars until the next time I need inspiration and perspective. The work is complete, no more adjustments to be made. I'll take it down to the Loop tomorrow – to Gamble Hinge Printers. They're well named as Vanity Press! They publish most of my American songs. I can just see it now, the reduced copy of the work – my painting, printed on cards – the painting on one side and my new carol on the other. I think it'll look nice. I'll write a personal note, on the bottom of the card, as I always do, before sending it to my friends in America and Wales.

*'With the Christmas greetings
of Daniel Protheroe'
1926*

And then 1927 will be a fresh start with new projects. Some tunes for children next, I think, with words by my friend, *Nantlais* - the snowdrop...

*O lili wen fach, o ble daethost di?
A'r gwynt mor arw ac mor oer ei gri.
Sut y mentraist di allan drwy'r eira i gyd?
Nid oes blodyn bach arall i'w weld yn y byd.*

*(Little Snowdrop, from whence did you come? Wind so cold and rough.
Snows deep. Not another flower is yet to be seen.)*

It'll be another work of art ... inspirational ... my Hannah loved snowdrops. They were blooming when we buried her ... sleep well, my love.

*Nadolig Llawn, fy nghariad i.**

* Happy Christmas, my love.

Cwmpodd ein Harwr

[extracts from two posthumous tributes to Dr Protheroe from the
Welsh diaspora of America]

*Wylwn, galarwn: Cwmpodd ein Harwr,
Yngbanol ei waith, yn anterth ei nerth.
Claf yw y galon, teg yw y Barnwr,
Duw'r cenbedlaethau – Preswylydd y berth.*

- Proff. Lloyd Morris
Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Y Drych
Mawrth 8, 1934.

Translation –

Weeping, mourning: Our hero has fallen.
His work, at the peak of his strength.
Sick his heart, fair and gentle is the Almighty
God of all nations, the Flame of the burning bush.*

* Translation by M. Morgan.

*We humbly pause in reverential sorrow,
While fragrant memories play, a dirge sublime
Upon the trembling heart-strings of a nation –
Across the sea there comes as answering chime –
A great and noble prince of song has fallen,
And o'er us desolation bowers high,
As when a giant oak goes crashing earthward,
We miss its rugged form against the sky.*

*We mourn the loss of our beloved Protheroe,
That virtuoso of the singing throng,
The helpful critic and the kindly teacher,
The patient molder of inspiring song*

*He never compromised with worldly standards,
He made his art subservient to his soul;
With growing faith, he kept his high ideals
While climbing ever upward to the goal;
And as he served his God, his art, his nation,
And from above his inspiration drew.
So, in our humble way, may we endeavor
To serve the good, the beautiful, the true.*

- William R. Thomas
Mankato, Minnesota
St. David's Day, 1934

Finding a Voice in the Valley

*Y mae afon a'i
ffrydiau a lawenbant..
a river whose streams make glad
(Text of Daniel Protheroe's anthem for women)*

Although the songs kept flowing, the second year as a new immigrant was the hardest. Among the challenges: trying to decide on how much to assimilate with the ways of my new country and how to keep a sense of my own heritage and values as part of my everyday identity. As with many migrants, you are in a hurry to get where you are going, to get things right, to keep moving, even if there are no safety nets. A new immigrant to the United States is not entitled to support or aid during the first few years and if you fall, so be it. Although there were some bumps and lumps along the way, I survived. My voice found a place for me.

+ + +

In the highly competitive and noisy environment of metropolitan America, a Welsh voice that has rhythm and lilt is something to treasure. A phrase often said to me is, 'I could listen to your voice for hours!' My voice presenting a message in a musical accent became my identity. It can both speak softly and sing to fill a large concert auditorium, which is why perhaps it needed a big country in order to express itself freely.

The blending of identities is something that I have actively pursued. Even twenty years on I have not lost my Welsh lilt, although subconsciously, the Americanisms creep in. My ear picks up the tone of accents around me and my voice goes along for the ride.

Hilary Tann was one of the first composers to whom I turned to for something unique to sing. The emotional memories of my homeland and the excitement of my new country needed a new narrative, a cloth spun on the loom of new music using the yarns of identities.

Home is not America for Hilary but rather is the foothills of the Adirondacks. Born in Ferndale, Rhondda Fach, Wales, Hilary has lived in the beautiful foothills of the Adirondack mountains in New York State since the late 1980s. ‘I don’t think I’ve left Wales,’ she asserted recently.*

The music of the Adirondacks grew out of the logging way of life, with men working in dangerous situations daily, and strong women managing everything else. The men sang and recited tales, not in harmony, but in a deep singing tradition for survival and bonding borne through danger. Such was the history of the coal mining valleys of South East Wales, and her family. No wonder she feels so connected to the area.

As she mused, the Hudson River rises in the Adirondacks and flows south through New York State, passing Manhattan Island and the Statue of Liberty, with the mouth emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The waves crash and rush towards the coast of Wales. There the waters of the Severn River mingle and thread with the sweet water of one of its tributaries, the Rhondda Fach, rising high up in Blaenrhondda flowing past Hilary’s home in Maerdy and Ferndale.

The summer months are precious times for Hilary, as they are days when she can dedicate herself completely to her composing. Between college teaching semesters, ‘quiet’ time is devoted to creativity and composition and her love of nature.

Our friendship in music worked from the very beginning. We talked about Wales, music in America, and our shared experiences of immigration. I well remember the first day. Hilary had scheduled time for us to meet for a while and take a walk in the countryside together, before she would return to her composing. In fact, as she later admitted, punctuated with her signature giggle, she had given herself a ‘let out clause’ in case we did not get on. Luckily, we did.

‘Wales and nature are my music,’ Hilary told me. ‘Looking back, I came to Princeton University as a composer writing serial music, but by chance or not, I heard in concert the exquisite sounds of the Japanese flute, the *shakuhachi*. The tones and waves of its sounds freed me, broke the constraint of serialism. And then, my ‘mam’ sent a tape of stories called *Talk Tidy*. It was a way of speaking Welsh in English. It was all so liberating.’

* Dr Hilary Tann, Personal Interview with the author, 18-19 July 2017 (Schuylerville, New York).

In the late 1990s, when we met, Hilary was already well known for her instrumental music, written both for small intimate ensembles and for larger orchestral groupings. We talked about her love of nature and its influence on her writing, and her recent time in Japan. Her fascination with Japanese precision and succinct lines, fired her passion for writing Haiku and for placing the poetry of R. S. Thomas in her music. Through it all her love for Wales and her family 'back home' was evident. 'It's everything,' she said later.

Three of Hilary's works stand out for me from those first days of new friendship, shared creativity and weaving of cultures: *Llef* for Shakuhachi (or flute) and cello, *From the Song of Amergin* for flute, cello and harp and *The Cresset Stone* for solo cello. In each, there were streams of exquisitely clean song with a freshness of new growth, tones of the Orient but with an underlying haunting *hiraeth* of home. I was hooked.

The Moor was the first vocal work that Hilary wrote for me. It is a six-minute piece for two unaccompanied voices. It is technically difficult, demanding of the singers a high level of concentration and acute awareness of rhythm and intonation as the sections and languages move without break from one into another. Much like it felt to be a new immigrant, there is no safety net as one must focus and keep on singing. The result though is tremendous. It is a very special sensual feeling when two voices blend together on music that vibrates through to your very being. For me, *The Moor* is a highly academic art song, a spiritual experience and a physical workout.

The haunting words of R. S. Thomas' poem, *The Moor*, are the pillars of the piece, along with Latin text from the Vulgata:

It was like a church to me.
I entered it on soft foot,
Breath held like a cap in the hand.
It was quiet.
What God there was made himself felt,
Not listened to, in clean colours
That brought a moistening of the eye,
In a movement of the wind over grass.

Hilary's work ends with echoes of Caradog Roberts' hymn tune *Rheidol* and with its ultimate closing phrases in Welsh. *Rheidol* with the prayer words of Elfed could be considered the unofficial national anthem of Wales.

*Cofia'n gwlad, Benllywydd tirion,
dy gyfiawnder fyddo'i grym:
cadw hi rhag llid gelynion,
rhag ei beiau'n fwy na dim:
rhag pob brad, nefol Dad,
taena d'adain dros ein gwlad.*

(Remember our country, Gentle Leader,
your justice prevails: keep her from all
enemies, from her sins more than all; from
all treachery, heavenly Father, cast your
wing over our country.)

Hilary wrote *The Moor* in the summer of 1997. She understood the range, texture and colour of my voice in the writing of *The Moor*. Likewise, I was aware of the way she painted and coloured the images from her mind in notes and sounds on her manuscript paper, returning to the senses and landscape of her home in the Rhondda Fach. 'The tongue can paint what the eye cannot see,' says the Chinese proverb, but sometimes the audience needs a little help when it comes to new music. And so, I asked an artist friend of mine in Abergavenny to find the locations that Hilary had in her mind. David took a set of striking photographs, made sketches, then created six large paintings that were paired with the music.

'The sketches of the paintings for *The Moor* are next to my bed now,' Hilary said recently. 'They are the first things that I see when I open my eyes each morning.'

The Moor was premiered in May 1998 at the Rio Grande University in southeast Ohio, having been commissioned by the 'Madog Center for Welsh Studies'.¹ The project was enabled by Elisabeth and Evan Davis, John Deaver and Elizabeth Gibson Drinko. At the premiere performance the stage was completely empty except for two singers, a large white screen on which was projected David's paintings, and Hilary at the computer blending the flow of the artwork to our

¹ Hilary Tann, *The Moor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

singing. The audience loved it, and even more important, Hilary was pleased with what she heard as the sounds resembled what she had long imagined in her mind. Together, we had forged a new expression for our Welsh-American identity, our voice. It was a pivotal time in our musical careers. For me it was a platform of a higher plane, and for Hilary, it was the road to writing fine choral and vocal music. Now with vocal works in her portfolio, Hilary was even more recognised and respected at home in Wales

Hilary wrote two more works for me, *Cân merch i'w Mam* for voice and solo instrument, and *Psalm 104* for mixed choir, trumpets and organ.² Each was groundbreaking, but *The Moor* led to a life-long friendship in music and a mutual understanding of the complexities in being an immigrant with a creative soul.

² Hilary Tann, *Cân merch i'w Mam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
Hilary Tann, *Psalm 104* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Côr Cymry Gogledd America : Syllable by syllable, note by note !

*Croesi a chreu a chanu! Crossing, creating and singing!
An Indian summer of a nation
Many melodies ringing
Joy in their souls.
(Preiddiau'r Cymry: M Elfyn)*

In May 1997, I was conducting my first state-wide *cymanfa ganu* in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin. The church was packed, and a visiting male-voice choir from Wales was supporting the congregational singing. During the supper break between the two sessions, a representative of the 1999 *National Cymanfa Ganu* who had travelled from Minneapolis-St. Paul to see me, asked whether I would be prepared to conduct the North American *cymanfa ganu* in two years' time, the fall of 1999. The event drew a crowd of some two to three thousand people from across the U.S.A. and Canada. A big leap indeed. The representative was Mary Morris Mergenthal, editor of *Y Drych* and a pillar of the North American Welsh community.

So, while my knees were still knocking under the table, I asked Mary which choir from Wales would support the singing at the festival. To which came the reply that one was not yet booked. The committee was undecided, as oftentimes choirs 'come over here and sing songs of America, while we want to hear those of Wales!' And then, as the crazy new immigrant that I was, I suggested forming a North American Welsh Choir.

During my early travels across America, I sang for Welsh communities and societies and was struck by the level of talent and passion for singing. How 'cool' it would be to bring together the singers from Seattle with those from New York, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Baltimore, and other places, to introduce them to contemporary Welsh music, more than hymns and old-fashioned arrangements. The idea forming in my mind became an exciting vision. It would be a project extraordinaire - creating a 'Welsh voice in America'!

And that's what happened. The call went out to all Welsh Societies across the U.S.A. and Canada. The festival committee gave me six months to prove there were enough singers across North America to form such a choir. In less than three months, there was a roster of well over a hundred quality choristers, and the North

American Welsh Choir, *Côr Cymry Gogledd America* (CCGA) was booked as the main act for the Grand Concert at the 1999 *National*.

Getting the booking, however, was just a small step in making the choir a reality. The committee told me that the choir would need a governing board with representatives from the U.S.A. and Canada, and most importantly, an attorney. Not anything I would ever have thought of back in Wales. The representatives were recruited, and the legal paperwork set in motion to become a 501(c)3 entity on March 2nd, 1998, as St. David's Day had been a Sunday that year!

My early immigrant years were times of great travel over long distances, allowing wonderful opportunities for thinking and trying to find solutions to challenges. Now that the choir was formed on paper, we needed a plan of action.

There were several elements that I drew on for this plan. It began with remembering the great thousand voiced concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in London with choirs from different parts of Wales preparing the same repertoire and then coming together in a large venue to sing a concert together. In preparation, the festival conductor would travel to the different ensembles to rehearse them separately, expressing the same musical expectations for the collective output. Then, on my travels across rural America before the Internet, I spoke with people who had very limited access to retail sources and learned how they shopped for clothing via catalogues, even buying harp kits and putting them together at home. Accordingly, my thought was of a 'catalogue choir' being put together from a 'music kit', and I was the glue joining the pieces together. Likewise, I drew inspiration from the Australian model of 'bush' schooling via walkie-talkie radio. The plan was hatched.

'A Community Choir that Spans a Continent' was the new choir strap line I wrote one Sunday afternoon while stuck at the Kansas City airport.

Croesi a chreu a chanu -

Crossing, creating and singing!

These words became the joyful motto for CCGA and were taken from a song that I commissioned for the choir's debut performance. The venue was the magnificent Central Lutheran Church in downtown Minneapolis, Minnesota. There were 110 voices in the choir on stage from 23 states and three provinces – Americans of Welsh Heritage, Welsh-Canadians, and others who loved to sing with us. It was a capacity crowd of over 2500 people. Quite a debut, as some participants recalled:

The important things that made this event so special came to mind. We were singing world premieres with the talented and inspired composers there with us: Hilary Tann, Menna Elfyn and David Evan Thomas, and Keith Davies Jones. We were singing in front of friends and family who knew the long road we had to travel to get up on that stage. And we were doing our ancestors proud, singing in a Welsh North American choir that we never imagined could ever come to be. ‘An Indian summer...an Indian summer of a nation...Many melodies ringing...joy in our souls!’

Danny Evan Proud, tenor

The sound in that great church was awesome. With Hilary Tann’s Psalm 104 building and soaring immense organ pipes lifting the choir up and the trumpets’ staccato notes high above, seeming to come from Heaven, the fugue-like ‘Molwch Arglwydd nef y nefoedd’ building to a climax. The final chords coursing like a great engine then the cut-off, the sound bouncing back at us, emotions at full pedal, hearts pounding, the applause, goosebumps up the spine and a tear falling from the cheek. It is such a blessing to know the great joy that only music and love can bring to the human soul.

Larry Whyte, bass

The journey to prepare the choir had been a syllable by syllable experience. The preparations required not only the teaching of the music, but the words in Welsh and the context and nuance of the song. The choristers were as diverse in their musical and language experiences as they were geographically thousands of miles apart. There were, for example, highly experienced choral singers in the Midwest while others more linguistically accustomed to singing in Welsh lived in Seattle and Toronto regions. Repetition and instruction took time, but the fundamental elements had to be a joy in the singing process, and an excitement at being part of something new and trailblazing.

‘Make the tenor line the melody for me, and I’ll be fine’. This comment came from a chorister from New Jersey who had never sung in a choir before or ‘run’ any line other than the tune but was passionate about his Welsh heritage and eager to share in this ‘big experiment’. And so, came the idea to produce teaching tools that would level the playing field for everyone, enabling the inexperienced singers the opportunity to hear their parts. Those who learned ‘by ear’ would pick up both the music and the words as a natural flow while experienced choristers would

appreciate the movement of Welsh language in song, where the stresses lie in the eliding of words, hearing the rhythm of the song, syllable by syllable. And they would all sing with my even-toned South Wales accent!

I am reminded of a quote heard in a choral adjudication at a New York State annual Eisteddfod at the turn of the twentieth century. The adjudicator told the competing choirs that they should, 'Never sing louder than lovely!' For my choir, 'lovely' would be interpreted as pure joy, and no dynamic marking would contain it.

The selection of just the right repertoire was very important. It needed to provide a challenge for the choristers, setting a high standard, but also be interesting to a largely non-Welsh audience. No more could the songs be in hymn-like strophic form, with the same tunes repeated over and over but with different verses. A non-Welsh speaking audience would not understand the meanings and so the music would lack interest for the public. Songs would need to be through-composed, staying fresh and changing, with music colouring and interpreting the meanings of the words.

The first repertoire included songs from Wales both old and new, as well as specially commissioned works that linked North America and Wales: a repertoire that would reflect what it means to be both Welsh and North American.

For me, one of the artistic joys was being able to shape the choir's repertoire to blend music styles and languages of the old and the new - bringing together composers and writers from Wales and North America to create a new voice for the choir. In *Preiddiau'r Cymry* (The Welsh Fold) poet, Menna Elfyn wrote -

Adar a hedod, gwenyn a felod
pysgod a nofiod, Cymry ymfudod
Birds fly, bees make honey,
fish swim, Welsh people emigrate.

O'r nant i'r anialdir
O'r tir du i dir glas a bras
O dir coch at orwel ac uchel dir.

From stream to desert;
From black land to the blue and vast

From red earth to horizon

And highland.

Crossing, creating and singing!

For eighteen months, the choristers had been working on their repertoire in all corners of the U.S.A. and in Canada. Almost every weekend during that time frame, I'd been offered and taken gigs as a singer and *cymanfa ganu* conductor across the country that would allow me to tack-on rehearsal times wherever I might be located. The cities ranged, among others: Los Angeles, Seattle, Kansas City, Columbia, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Shakopee, Phoenix, Toronto, Niagara Falls, Columbus, Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Morristown and Ocean Grove. I travelled thousands of miles working with groups of all sizes but could only imagine in my head how the whole ensemble would sound. And the reality was far better than envisioned. It was spine-tinglingly magnificent: a multi-generational choir, solid in voice and music.

Gradually they had learned the music and how to sing the language, and I had learned how to conduct them in the singing of our songs. The gathering together happened at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota. The choristers travelled from across North America to this small Lutheran-Swedish college town in central Minnesota. On the grounds of the three hundred and forty acre campus we gathered to meet each other and to make a large group of singers into one big coherent choir. We were all excited and thrilled to be a part of the grand venture. At the Sunday night 'welcome', I felt as a bride at her receiving line. Of the hundred and ten plus people there, I was the only person that knew each individual, and the joyful hugs of greeting said it all. Many were strangers to each other by sight, if not by name and story.

Monday morning, on stage in the college's beautiful *Jussi Bjorling* Concert Hall with its seated risers and Steinway grand piano, was the first of three days of intense rehearsals focused on creating the 'voice' of *Côr Cymry Gogledd America*, the North American Welsh Choir. I will never forget the choir's first singing together that Monday morning - it was the beautiful 'classic' 23rd Psalm, *Yr Arglwydd yw fy Mugail* by Caradog Roberts. It was so moving, and I was overwhelmed by the emotion of the waves of sound and the shared experience.

Choral Discipline told,

One favourite moment was Mari rushing into the dining room at Gustavus Adolphus to stop our singing, just as everyone was reaching for their hymnals and the momentum was about to become unstoppable. The poignancy of that restraint, and of Mari imposing it, stretched my conception of what I was doing as a choir member and I found the tension of not singing because I was a singer surprising - socially, spiritually and musically.

Shan Holt, alto

Listening to the choir at Minneapolis moved me so much – the sheer energy, passion, delight of the choir was a real joy. It was wonderful to sense the shared aspiration of so many people in urging a new kind of Welshness into being through song. A high point too of all the choral pieces I've written was to be there bearing witness to the sheer professionalism and quality of sound. Mari Morgan certainly made more than a choir when she gathered this choir together – apart from making history she achieved one of the most fundamental aspects of what it is to be human ...the need to share and connect.

Menna Elfyn, poet

More than anything, I was struck by the bonding and camaraderie in the choir – a singing community! Hearing (and watching) the choir one could not help but have thoughts about all the Welsh choirs of past years...the chapel choirs, the school choirs, the mining choirs. I felt that I was very much part of a very old tradition and that I was extraordinarily privileged to be present at the start of a new one. It's a great venture. I loved hearing your performance of Psalm 104 – I cannot think of any more special birthing for a new piece.

Hilary Tann, composer

The experience of singing in a choir of over a hundred people was a first for me. I sing in my church choir at home, and the opportunity to stretch my 'wings' in Côr Cymry Gogledd America was wonderful.

Beth Landmesser, soprano

The other stand out moment for me was when Hilary Tann drove us through Psalm 104 at the church in Minneapolis. I've never sung for the composer before, but I will never forget it. What she drew from us, and the uncompromising demands she made on us, and the call to blow the back out of the church on that impossible C sharp – and her sensual envy of the basses' ability to hit that low F – I found her intoxicating, and I found it magical how, even though I had thought I was giving my best, she tapped something I didn't know was there in me and in all of us, and suddenly we were something we hadn't been before or known we could be - Spine-tingling moment.

Shan Holt, alto

For me, singing in the landmark CCGA was a dream come true. I kept thinking about how proud my grandparents would be to hear me singing all those wonderful numbers in WELSH.

Nancy Jones Miller, alto

Like me, every one of you has experienced Mari's powers of persuasion at first hand. The ability to motivate others and to strengthen their belief in themselves is a very special gift and, thanks to the commitment and energy she radiated in Minnesota, we didn't just meet our challenges; we went beyond them. It was extraordinary to watch the Choir grow in confidence and stature from one day to the next. For me, the most memorable moment was the spontaneous standing ovation from the Grand Concert audience; a marvellous and fitting tribute to the miracle that was Minneapolis.

*Rhian Davies, musicologist & host**

Following that performance, the North American Welsh Choir went on the road giving national and regional concerts across the U.S.A. and Canada, crossing the Atlantic to Wales, going south to Argentina and then to New Zealand. Together we brought our music to new audiences. There were so many memorable performances, such as singing in St. David's Cathedral in Wales, at a celebration of Wales at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., at Trinity Church, Wall Street and more poignantly at the 9/11 Remembrance in New York.

* Quotations from *North American Welsh Choir Bulletin*, October 1999.

SONG

Blended melodies
sound a tale,

A telling that stirs
from time to place.

Emotions hidden,
unlocking now

Heart out of rhythm,
Chanting low.

Life off-key.
In murmur, prayers,

Sing through sorrow.
Secrets shared,

Joy in sorrow,
Tomorrow?

Trauma Shared
in a Nation's Song

[Harmonia est discordia concors:
Harmony is discord rendered concordant]

Sweet freedom's song;
of thee I sing.

It was always my favourite spot for watching the busy traffic of the Hudson River, from high up on top of the Palisades in the Heights of Weehawken. It is a great watchtower of the hardworking waterway as it cuts through between New Jersey and the west side of Manhattan.

The late summer's day with temperatures in the 70s was simply beautiful. The sky was a brilliant royal blue and the sun was shining. The breeze was gentle as I left the house to walk two blocks north to mail a letter in the post box on the corner. I was easing into my day before driving to work, a little late, enjoying the morning with a slow, leisurely walk in the sunshine. The days prior had been hectic with lots of driving across the New England states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont.

As I turned back south, I noticed that there were people crossing the road from all directions. They were coming out of houses, stopping cars, and leaving the New York commuter bus stops, to cross the road to see what was happening.

'There's been an accident - it's on all the news channels!' As I walked to the monument and looked down river along the line of skyscrapers to the pair of iconic towers in the distance, I saw what they were talking about. There it was, the smoke from the first Tower. It was just after nine o'clock.

Next to me, the monument commemorated the place where Alexander Hamilton, one of the nation's Founding Fathers and the first Secretary of the Treasury, was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr, the Vice-President of the United States. A big American flag was flying, as always, in honour of the lofty history that meant little to me on that warm September morning.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a large man sitting on the wall, legs wide apart, with his arms wrapped around the big black boombox on his lap. It was tuned into the local Spanish radio station. Nothing strange about that, for the area around Weehawken has more Cubans living there than in Havana. He sat stock still as we all watched,

'...un vuelo...una...una aerolínea de pasajeros...la segunda...por la dirección...ahora...o Dios...'*

At eight-minutes passed nine the second plane ploughed into the second of the Twin Towers. The gasps rippled through the mottled crowd thrown together to witness something we didn't really know what we were seeing. It was a communal

* a plane, a passenger plane, the second, in the direction, now, oh God.

intake of a breath and we kept holding it for a long time. In shock, I ran back into the house to turn on the television and watch a re-run of what I had just seen outside – over and over again.

‘Dad, fi sy’ ’ma. Fi’n sâff...’ a quick telephone call to my father and mother at home in Wales, to let them know that I was safe.

‘Ni’n gweld e’n digwydd ar y teledu nawr...’ They, too, were watching the live feed in Llanelli.

Later we would learn that the second hijacked plane which had taken off from Boston’s Logan airport was forced off its scheduled course into the Towers.

‘My husband and I were booked on that flight,’ Myra, a Welsh-American friend would tell me years later. ‘We were to fly from Boston to San Francisco, but we decided to change our flight and travel home on Monday, the day before.’ Was it luck or Divine intervention possibly, or simply not the day for ‘the Call’?

I went back outside to the park, in Weehawken, though locals fondly call it simply, ‘the Hawk’. By now, there were even more people on the grass, all standing in a silence packed with attention, looking south. The fellow with the boombox was still sitting on the wall. He hadn’t moved, and he would stay at his ‘post’ for the entire day. His radio was still commentating. The difference now was that the broadcaster’s Spanish was being translated, in soft whispers, by a fellow witness among us.

Then we saw it happen. We watched it fall - the first tower, a collapsed icon of the Manhattan skyline, and the workplace of a colleague and friend whose offices I had just recently visited.

Rob worked for a financial services firm, and as I was there on official company business, I was given the tour of the offices including the Chairman’s area, high up in the Tower, with the spectacular view of the New York Bay and the Statue of Liberty. It was so very small down below, almost like a child’s toy model of that beacon that had welcomed so many immigrants. Over to the right, Ellis Island, where tens of thousands from all over the world had been processed and distributed across the country. On the water, the great trans-Atlantic cruise ships seemed as children’s toys as barges tugged them in and out of their berths, and busy ferries crisscrossing the north-south flow of the river, manoeuvring peoples across from Jersey’s ferry terminals to the landings of Manhattan.

‘Can you see the Verrazano?’ he said. The Narrows Bridge hooking the boroughs of Staten Island and Brooklyn, the mighty tankers and supply carriers passing underneath its span as the Hudson’s tides eased out to the Atlantic Ocean, and maybe, across its waves to Wales.

I thought of the security badge that I’d kept, as a souvenir of that visit back in July, cluttering my desk drawer.

And as I wondered whether Rob was in the tower that had fallen, a Chinese gentleman, standing next to me, quietly raised his arm and pointed. He was pointing at the Tower. And in a staccato voice and heavily accented English, he said, ‘My daughter works there!’ Without anything more, he simply turned and left. I was numb to his words. And with the others around, all we could do nothing was keep on watching. A hushed congregation of hundreds shocked into silence. Only the boom box pumping, continuing commentary – *un choque... la conmoción ... un golpe ... que tristeza... que ...* *

‘Que quilombo!’

The area was in lock-down with roads closed to traffic in possibly the busiest area in the country, and it would stay that way for days. Quickly, the airways followed, grounded. Closed. The dissonance of the trauma began to rumble and ripple through us all, everywhere.

On that fateful day, I agreed to speak with the live broadcasters of BBC Cymru whose researchers had tracked me down. What was happening? What had I witnessed? What was happening on the ground? What’s being said? With few correspondents in the City, the broadcaster was searching for British/Welsh-speaking people.

As I began to speak, I realized that I had a problem. Words would not flow. What were the words? The English and the Welsh words mingled in a jumble of sounds. The Welsh that I had spoken all of my life – my mother tongue – was inaccessible. The enormity and depth of emotion seemed to be worse in Welsh than English.

* a crash, the shock, a hit, what sadness... what ...profanity!

The tops of the Twin Towers housed major communications devices and transmitters, and so, our broadcast had to be interrupted. It could not go out live, thankfully, for me.

‘Ask a question,’ I told the interviewer, ‘but tell me the key words for the reply,’ – *awyren* (airplane) – *trychineb* (tragedy) – *tyrau* (towers) – Pentagon – *lladdwyd* (killed) – *chwalwyd* (destroyed) – and then I answered the questions in Welsh. Moments later it was all seamlessly joined together like a quilt of patches before broadcast over the television and radio waves home to my family.

‘How did it sound?’ I nervously questioned my father over the phone, before the lines went down.

‘Well,’ he said mustering his ministerial skills, “there were a few of you interviewed, and you all sounded as if you’d had a big shock.”

The next day, September 12th, I went to work as usual. What else could I do? The ‘office’ was set in Morris County parkland some forty miles west of the site of the attack in New York. As I turned into the tree-lined driveway of the lush-green estate grounds, it all seemed so surreal. In the beauty of that setting, I saw managers flustered, not knowing how to lead. People struggled. Eager messages went out via email for volunteers to donate blood, all lines were busy but ultimately, of course, the life-giving donations were not required; hospitals and emergency room response teams in the region were ready to receive casualties that did not come.

My day job then was in philanthropy as a Planned Giving fundraiser for *The Seeing Eye*, the pre-eminent dog-guide school in North America, an institution with household recognition. It was part of my job to travel the country to discuss technical gift plans with would-be donors. It was up to me to steward on-going relationships and to establish closing gifts that would likely not fully materialize until the end of life, leaving something of a legacy for the next generation. Possibly as a minister’s daughter, I was accustomed to being around death and it certainly was good training for communicating with all kinds of people. I never knew what to expect when visiting someone’s home for the first time, and yet, it was where the best discussions always happened.

What many colleagues and I found particularly difficult was that the institution’s president would not allow for an organisation-wide gathering to console

and share the pain and fear that everyone was feeling. It was not ‘politically correct’, in his opinion, to gather at the workplace. He lost my respect that day.

A day or two later some staff members decided that this was not right and took matters into their own hands. At noon, when everyone stopped to eat lunch together, a senior member of staff and a highly respected man stood at the entryway to the dining room. In his arms, held tight to his chest was a tri-folded American Flag. He carried the *Stars and Stripes* almost as a protective shield in battle. The flag’s fold signifying its presentation, with military reverence, to a family at the funeral of one who had served his or her country with thanks from ‘a grateful nation’. The folded flag gave him and all of us entering the room the right and the symbol by which to unite.

Religion...the free exercise thereof;
Freedom of speech;
right of the people peaceably to
assemble ...

(First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution)

The elegant dining room overlooking the idyllic countryside was set for a luncheon that no-one had the appetite to eat. The wait-staff, the administrators, the grounds people, the veterinarians and technicians, the trainers and educators, the graduates in class from all over the country sat at tables with their dog-guides in training tucked underneath - all waited in an expectant silence.

Clutching his flag, he prayed for us all.

Next came an insistent request from the president’s assistant, ‘We need you to sing for us!’

‘What?’ I asked, rather stunned at the request.

‘America’s songs’ came the fast reply along with a request list. Although I knew the tunes, the words were not familiar to me, but in an instant, the ever-efficient personal assistant handed me song sheets with words printed in a large font. I stood up and together we began the healing process afforded through shared music.

While the storm clouds gather

...as we raise

Our voices in a solemn prayer.

...Stand beside her and guide her

Thru the night with a light from above

Land of the pilgrims' pride,

Let Freedom ring.

Let music swell the breeze,

.. ring from all the trees

Sweet Freedom's song;

Let all that breathe partake;

The sound prolong

America! God shed His grace on thee,

Confirm thy soul in self-control,

Thy liberty in law!

God Bless America

From sea to shining sea!

In the silence that followed, the breath of the room calmed in the lingering sounds of the words; spirits quietened, dog-tails lay still, and tears flowed freely from those gathered.

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On Saturday, September 15th, 2001 the choristers of the Mid-Atlantic region of *Côr Cymry Gogledd America*, gathered in Morristown, New Jersey for a scheduled day of rehearsing and learning new music of Wales and North America. It was a busy time preparing for a concert tour to Wales the following summer. It would be the choir's first of many international tours, but for many it was the first visit *i'r hen wlad* (to the old country), and so the pressure was on.

Although there were people who shared the attitude to just carry on as if nothing had happened, I did not agree with that approach. The choir was my responsibility and I felt an obligation to the choristers to provide, among other things, an opportunity to express our pain.

The pre-singing routine began with gentle stretching and breathing, body warms ups, shaking out stiffness, then a cleansing laugh as we shook out our ‘wiggle-woggle’. Next came the routine of vocalising and breathing, moving up and down scales and patterns before coming together in tight harmony that challenged the discipline of intonation but not the voice.

‘Bu-gei-lío’r Gwe-nith Gwy-n’... we worked each song for pronunciation as most of the group had little experience of singing in Welsh before the choir had started. We lost ourselves in the work and occasionally humour slipped in. Some choristers ribbed me with questions that we had been over and over many times.

‘How do you sing it?’ came the persistent questions.

‘Bee – geh – lio.... ‘Is that bugeilio or bugailio?’

‘Yes, but how do you say it?’

‘Sing it like this?’

Which way? This way! That way? It doesn’t matter!

We worked on *Lifting the Sky* the extended piece that had been written for us.

But rivers are water drops joined
With oceans that break at land’s end;
And streams that trickle down from alpine scree,
Out to the sea, carve stone.

Together, like drops in the stream,
We change things by sharing; so dream
And dare to aspire when the sky hangs close,
Dare to hope; dare to try.

Whenever clouds dampen our days,
We can drive that darkness away
When our voices all rise together, we
Can even lift the sky.

(Carolyn Maddux)

Although in English, the choir’s regional lilt just didn’t line up right – the Rs were flat and the consonants were dropped. Shockingly it seemed easier to get

the group to sing together as one in Welsh, and in my frustration, I distractedly blurted out -

‘Turn to page *tweh-(n)y..*’

American! That’s how I sounded, and the room collapsed in heaps of laughter. The tension had been released.

We enjoyed the day together, relaxing from the strain outside. *Amser ‘mamol’ mewn cân*, it was almost mothering and soothing, as we rehearsed beautiful and joyful songs and music in celebration of Wales.

All too soon however, our time of joint recluse was drawing to a close and we would again have to face the tragedy of the world around us.

‘May we sing in the Sanctuary for our own service of remembrance and prayers?’ I had asked the church authorities. Maybe what we needed was in Dr Rowan Williams’ words, a ‘space to breathe’, for we were all, collectively, holding our breath - in anguish.

And so, at the end of the afternoon I brought the rehearsal to a close, and we quietly left the choir room, making our way into the beautiful sanctuary of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. We walked into the magnificence of the sacred setting, knowing that we would share emotions not yet explored. Under the vaulted roof of the Norman-like church with the light streaming through the Medieval styled stained-glass windows, we circled ourselves in front of the Spanish gates opening to the quire and ornate high altar. We *round* together to sing our own time of solace.

As I looked into the faces of the choristers, I saw the tension and fatigue that I felt within myself, and asked, ‘Shall we all take a deep breath together then?’ As I raised my arms to begin, I had the feeling that we were in a place, as T. S. Eliot said, ‘where prayer has been valid’.

This validation of prayer came to us in the songs with *Yr Arglwydd yw fy Mugail* (The Lord is my Shepherd) and ‘Kyrie’ from *Offeren Fer* (Short Mass). The safety to release fear and isolation in *Hafan Gobaith* (Hope’s Shelter), and a return to a comforting routine of tomorrow, *Yfory*. The words rang out,

Yma cei ysbaid, noddfa i’th enaid

Cei yma orffwys

Here, find a haven (for the soul)

A shoulder you can lean on.
Lay down your burden,
Tomorrow is another day.

We found a blessed release as we cried through our songs.

Sitting in the sanctuary, listening to us was one of the church clergy who had witnessed the tragedy at its heart. She had been in Trinity Church, Wall Street listening to the then Archbishop of Wales on the morning of the previous Tuesday. She heard the planes smash into the Twin Towers as Dr Rowan Williams spoke about the complex harmonies of Welsh hymnody. He later wrote of the moment:

So, this is writing in the dust,
because it tries to hold that
moment for a little longer,
long enough for some of our
demons to walk away.

Sharing those Welsh harmonies in our songs anchored us in the safety of our shared heritage. And in the words of a prayer my father had written for me to read we shared our collective vulnerability. In the sharing of our national songs came support for the trauma of the emergency room nurse who had prepared to receive casualties that did not arrive, the teacher who had helped tell young children of the death of a parent, the worker who had walked home with the crowds through the dust and ash of Lower Manhattan to New Jersey across the George Washington Bridge, and many more.

The prayer says in part,

A ninnau wedi'n bwrw oddi ar ein hechel
gan ddigwyddiadau'r wythnos...
drwy'r tristwch a'r hiraeth a deimlwn yn ein calonnau...
Chwalwyd y cyfan gan yr awydd am ddialedd,
... gan galon ag atgasedd yn llawn ynnddi...
Cofio'r cyfarchion olaf o gariad a wnaed,
nad ant fyth yn angof...

Bydded i gynhesrwydd y cariad...
ein cynnal ni, yn yr awr dywyll hon.

- amen

(off our axel are we tipped by the week's events
by sadness and longing in our hearts...
all is shattered by the desire for revenge
with a heart of hatred...
remembering the last calls of love made...
never to be forgotten...
Be that the warmth of the love...
Sustain us, in this dark hour.)

+ + +

The second Sunday after the tragedy I was in Mankato, Minnesota, in the upper Midwest of the country and the lower centre of the state. The city sits on the bend of the Minnesota River at its confluence with the Blue Earth River, and I had flown out to conduct the Minnesota State *Cymanfa Ganu*. It was a welcome relief to be away in the leafy countryside of the 'land of ten thousand lakes' after leaving the eerily quiet Newark airport in New Jersey.

Over the last twenty-two years I have conducted numerous *cymanfaoedd canu* in communities across the United States, from Los Angeles to New York. The format for many of the long-standing events follow the same pattern, beginning with the singing of the American anthem, and then the reciting of the Pledge, before launching into the Welsh hymns.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America,
and to the Republic for which it stands
one Nation under God,
indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.

The Cymanfa sessions inevitably conclude with the singing of the great hymn tune, *Cwm Rhondda* and the rousing strains of *Mae Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*, the Welsh National Anthem. In a land where the Pledge of Allegiance is declared to the flag of a country made of a 'sovereign nation of many sovereign states', it is, in the words of Henry James, 'a complex thing to be an American'.

The American flag, always present in daily life, appeared even more so in the days and weeks following the attacks. It flew from car windows and truck tailgates. It was displayed on bumpers, on lapel pins and on clothing. The country was wrapping itself in the flag and its national anthem, the ode to ‘Old Glory’. The authors of *Etiquette of the Stars and Stripes* (National Americanization Committee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. 1927) might have a few interesting comments to make on the diversity of uses made of it now.

That Sunday in Mankato, I conducted a *Cymanfa Ganu* at the First Presbyterian Church for the descendants of Welsh peoples and others who had settled in the Lake Crystal area. The beautiful historic church designed by Warren H. Hayes for ‘social gospel’ in the diagonal auditorium pattern, is a perfect acoustic for *cymanfa* singing. The fan shaped sanctuary pews both upstairs and downstairs were full of some six hundred singers. There was a nervous tension in the air, on the edge of deep emotion. As the conductor situated in the middle of the apron of the altar, I had the best acoustic spot for receiving the sound. The challenge and reward of directing a *cymanfa ganu* always lies in the unexpected, and a lasting memory of that afternoon was an impromptu situation. As ‘special music’, the North American Welsh Choir presented a positive hymn, *Gair Disglair Duw* that I had chosen especially for the day. The choir sang the hymn in Welsh and then as the interlude continued I turned to the fine local children’s choir who responded and joined in the up-tempo hymn with the English version *Shine, Jesus Shine* – and finally all the singers in the sanctuary joined together as one chorus.

Rho dy dân i ni.
Rhed, afon gras
Taena gariad ar draws y gwledydd
Dyro dy air
A goleuni a fydd.

Blaze Spirit blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow river flow
Flood the nations
With grace and mercy
And let there be light.

During the dark and turbulent days of World War I, David Lloyd George thought singing to be 'beneficial' for keeping up the morale. And so, he encouraged the inclusion of a *cymanfa ganu* in the programme of the National Eisteddfod. From the stage of the first National Eisteddfod *Cymanfa Ganu* in Aberystwyth in 1916, Lloyd George noted that 'people could express in song, feelings that they couldn't express in words.' The six thousand voices inside the Eisteddfod Pavilion and the 11,000 outside agreed with him, as did all of us in Mankato.

For the Sabbaths immediately following the tragedy of Nine-Eleven, religious meeting places in the New York area were jammed with people searching for some degree of comfort, reassurance and direction. People of all faiths, no matter where they came from or how long they had been in the United States, were actively seeking spiritual guidance. On the second Sunday in October 2001 *Eglwys y Cymry*, New York's Welsh Church met for its monthly service. We remembered those lives lost and spiritually wrapped ourselves in our heritage with a language that was 'motherly' and reassuring. As the country was moving towards war and retaliation, the full extent of the tragedy was unfolding: posters of faces lost were plastered in train stations, bus terminals, ferry crossings, walls, railings; desperate families clung to the hope of finding loved ones in an era prior to social media's 'check-in safe'. At *Eglwys y Cymry*, the Church President encouraged us as a congregation to share with each other the sign of Peace. The only memory I have of that service is in the response to the church leader's call. Across the spacious sanctuary of Rutgers Presbyterian Church, dear friends waved to me. Their hands motioned the America Sign Language for love, and the Church President's weary face broke into an easy smile.

'You are now eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship,' Daniel Learned, my immigration attorney, wrote to me from his law office in East Lansing, Michigan.

'After five years of residency as a Green Card holder, you can now apply to be a citizen of this country.'

Mr Learned had written those words to me in early 2001, but I had not done anything about it. As a Green Card holder, I had *mostly* the same rights as a citizen, except, notably, the right to vote. I was too busy living my life, building a career and travelling the country to think too seriously about it. That was until Nine

Eleven changed everything. And so, when the paralegal reminded me of my eligibility, this time I said yes, I'm ready to do it. Gertrude Stein asked, 'Where is home? A country that belongs to you?' Having shared in the experience of a national trauma, it felt right to begin the application process for American citizenship.

Looking back, I find the most interesting part of this very bureaucratic process of filling in forms and background checks, was the preparation for the Test. Daniel sent me pages of questions on a range of subjects that I should know about. They were in categories, 'the country's governance, principles of democracy, rights and responsibilities, history from Colonial to recent days, geography, national holidays,' and other civics items. I had to study America - the place I was selecting to be home.

For months I carried the list with me, asking friends and colleagues to quiz me on the details. Did I have the facts down? I was shocked that so many American-born citizens did not know the information. Talking about the test came in handy when looking for conversation topics while visiting donors.

'Where is Francis Scott Key buried?'

It was not on the list of questions, but I was quizzed on it by a donor I visited in Gaithersburg, Maryland. I will always be grateful to the elderly gentleman and his shy wife for discussing American citizenship with me, and I'll never forget where the writer of the lyrics for 'Stars and Stripes' is buried.

'Frederick, Maryland.'

Later, the gentleman from Gaithersburg and his wife sent me a copy of 'The Constitution of the United States of America' along with 'The Declaration of Independence'.

In August 2002, I raised my right hand to swear allegiance to the United States of America in the Federal Buildings of downtown Newark, New Jersey with a host of peoples from around the world. It was a room-full of dreams. The friends that stood next to me that day were themselves descendants of immigrants from Wales, Scandinavia and Belize. After the ceremony, we went into Manhattan to celebrate at *Chez Josephine*, a landmark bistro café and piano bar on 42nd Street.

There, in the Paris of 1926 setting with plush tributes to Josephine Baker, more friends gathered to share in my new citizenship.

‘Why are you here tonight?’ asked the charming and flamboyant host, Jean-Claude Baker, himself a French-American. When we replied that it was to celebrate my new citizenship, he motioned to a visiting television crew from one of New York’s main cable stations. They turned their bright lights on and interviewed me on the day’s events, and, of course I told them that we had chosen *Chez Josephine* for its warmth and elegance being the ideal sophisticated musical place in which to celebrate my landmark event. After the crew left, a bottle of champagne was presented to the table, courtesy of the house.

‘Welcome to America!’ cheered M. Jean-Claude.

Côr Cymry Gogledd America choristers also helped celebrate my new citizenship by presenting me with a very special gift.

‘We chose them especially for you,’ said Nancy for the group. It was a collection that had been carefully selected for me to sing from a wide range of Native American ballads to Appalachian folk songs, African American spirituals to Shaker melodies and Moravian Hymns and Hawaiian airs to Spanish lullabies and even Jazz numbers. It was a ‘musical welcome wagon’ to help me understand the diversity of my new country by singing her songs.

‘A nation’s history is in its songs’ wrote Daralaw, a Welsh-American musicologist at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. I have been fortunate to find harmony in the mixed identities of the immigrant, the Welsh and the American, as if in the blending of two braids of a river. It has not always flown smoothly, for immigration is, as John Berger says, ‘to dismantle the centre of the world ... to move into a lost, disorientated one of fragments.’ We all look for our place in the new homeland. Perhaps had I known how hard it would be I might not have embarked on the journey, but through music, music making, and new friendships, the experience has been one to treasure.

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SIX U.S. Presidential elections have taken place during the years that I have lived in America, and I have had the right to cast my vote in five of them. I have done so with great pride and a deep sense of duty. My vote is my voice.

FOUR Presidents have held Office, and with each I have learned more words and phrases: patriotism, ‘Yes, we can’, inclusion, ‘We the people’, democracy, free elections, liberty, freedom of speech, equality, social justice, desegregation, loving the one you love, measured response to darker times now of isolation, self-interest, fake news, bigotry, discrimination, presentism, walls, ‘my generals’, ‘military might’, and impeachment. ‘What our Democracy Demands?’ Where will it end? Each day I find the beacon of hope and constant reminder in the letter I received from the White House in 2002 when I became a citizen:

Americans are united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals. The grandest ... is an unfolding promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, and that no insignificant person was ever born. Our country has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by principles that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests, and teach us what it means to be citizens. And every new citizen, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.... As you begin to participate in our democracy, I ask you to serve your new Nation, beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens building communities of service and a Nation of character.... Welcome to the joy, responsibility and freedom of American citizenship.

We are again, as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, ‘not experiencing the best of times.’ And yet, as she says, there is ‘reason to hope that we will see a better day. The pendulum, when it swings too far in one direction, will swing back the other way’. Waiting for the ‘swing back’ seems, at times, as the click-click-click of a metronome beat, not yet finding the right setting for the sweeping velocity of change.

It might be that we are all part of a chorus, not a Greek chorus one hopes, but one that together helps unlock dissonant clusters, releasing fluid melodies emerging forth from whispered prayers to spirited tunes, from flag-waving marches to magnificent songs yet to be sung or composed in glorious concordant harmony. There may yet be a need to write a new song, as a nod to those Welsh pioneering composers and others, in an effort to bring unity to the singing of a diverse society.

In post-apartheid South Africa, President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu embraced the humanitarian philosophy of compassion which is *Ubuntu*. The word from the Nguni language, *Ubuntu* recognises that we are all connected as the ‘peace within, peace between, peace among’. *Ubuntu* was inscribed on a much-treasured gift that was presented to me in recognition of my leadership skills as a choral conductor. Along with the word was the phrase, ‘A person is a person because of other people.’ In Welsh, there is a similar sounding word, *amboitu* with a usage that implies questions: What are you about? Who are you? These are not always easy to answer truthfully. One of my father’s favourite words was *Agape*, from the Greek, it is another complex word with a meaning of ‘the highest form of love, charity’. For my father *agape* signified a solemn covenant of love between his God and mankind, and man’s love of God. He was community spirited and a lifelong supporter of the Urdd, the Welsh movement for youth. His pledge comes to mind – that of *ffyddlon i Gymru, i gyd-ddyn ac i Grist*.*

As a musician, who, as a young child without perfect pitch suffered temporary hearing loss, I find that I now watch for cues as I attend to the lilt in voices of others. As a conductor, I notice when older singers lose range of hearing. I have found that a few subtle changes offering both visual and vocal support can often be enough to help them and also strengthen the choir as a whole. Placing the singer within immediate range of a chorister with a different vocal timbre, and directly in my line of sight enable them to both hear and see the gestures of the music. Likewise, the ensemble is reinforced by the maturity and diversity in its sound. It could be a choral metaphor for the assimilation of immigrants into a new country and a diverse nation. The experience of hearing loss in childhood, which required corrective surgery, has contributed to my ability to notice people in their sounds, to my becoming a ‘watcher of people’.

Memory is a funny thing. What we truly remember and what we recall in the telling, can blur the lines. There are so many details of that Nine-Eleven period that have left me, but in the voices and the music of those days the visions are still vivid, and the emotion of the memories are both hardened and softened.

‘Grief, when it comes, is nothing like we expect it to be,’ Joan Didion wrote. ‘[...]Grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the daily-ness of life’.³ After my father’s death, I

* Faithful to Wales, to fellowman, and to Christ.

³ Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (New York: Knopf, 2005)

found that at times I was lost in myself. Those were choppy, topsy-turvy days. And though I tried, I could not hear the music.

If I were me,
who should I be?
How to see
The *doh-re-mi*
Of how to be me.

The creativity and freedom of writing words and imagining the lives of others brought me back to myself, to the music and the new harmony of my own mighty colossus of sounds and voices. Paul Touriner, one of my father's favourite authors, said that one of his goals of writing was 'to have an adventure in company with my readers both known and unknown'.

In the days and weeks immediately following the trauma of Nine-Eleven, we were a kinder people, more patient and understanding of emotions. Although laced with fear and uncertainty, they were gentler times.

T. Gwynn Jones, the Welsh poet summed it up with the phrase,

Byd gwyn fydd byd a gano: Gwaraidd fydd ei gerddi fo
(Blessed is the world that sings; Gentle are its songs).

Today, the song title *Ymlaen a'r Gân* keeps me going: sing on for a nation's story is in its songs whether old, new, and not yet written, for the dissonance of conflict resolves in the striving for concord.

Gorfoledd fydd cân ein dydd,
Pan ddaw ein byd i'w gynghanedd.
(Joyous the song of days, our world in harmony.)

Harmonia est discordia concors.

Grief's flow

Dip your toe in the gurgling
dribble of the rising stream.
It's fresh and clean,
and icy cold.

Wade to the middle of its
murmuring ripples of airs.
Gasp in its melodies,
chanting chill.

Bathe in tears
flowing free, in
rapids and whirling
pools of braids undammed.

Cling to the loose branch
propelled through
churning dissonance of
brewing waters.

Tread the circling swells
of tritone channels:
screaming in unrelenting
sobbing currents.

Curve with contours,
gentler now. Tides
releasing at the mouth
in minor tunes.

Flow waves, open
whole on notes in lapping
unity. Song restored,
ready, in life's *round* melody.

Étude de Concert

Cân fy nwylo

La chanson de mes mains

Song of my hands

The Last Interview
and other conversations

Memories

My grandmother kept boxes,
Keepsakes, for my sake.
Treasures, clippings, records
and photos faded.
Sometimes, simply a name.
We're family,
Kin that made a mark.
Remember her, she'd say.

Mari(e)

Certificates of life and death
(found poems, from official documents)

Maria Williams, girl

Born Maesteg

March 31, 1884

To William Thomas Williams, collier
and Ann Bedlington Williams, formerly Kirkhouse

34 Commercial Street, Maesteg

County of Glamorgan

Bridgend District



Maria Williams, female

Known as Marie Novello

48 Clarence Gate Gardens.

Died North Marylebone

June 21, 1928

42 years [sic]

Spinster, professional pianist,

Daughter of William Thomas Williams

(deceased) (tenor vocalist)

Endothelioma

of Pharynx and soft palate

No PM

Certified: W. B. Thomson, M.D.

Registered: David Davies,

Brother-in law Bargoed.

County of London

St. Marylebone District

Étude de Concert

Étude (Fr., 'ā-tüd'): A study; especially, one affording practice in some particular technical difficulty... Étude de concert, one designed for artistic value in public performance.

[*Ysbryd, Angau*]*

Oh, it's you. I knew you'd be the one who would come for me. You've always been my escort, but I'm not ready to go with you yet. It's not my time. I've still got some things to say. Wait for me, won't you? I'm glad it's you who was sent. I can hear your voice, singing me home, but there's one last melody to play before my vigil is complete.

+ + + +

[A conversation between internationally renowned pianist, Marie Novello and the editor of 'The Last Interview' series. It takes place at Ms. Novello's garden flat in Marylebone, London. It is only a question of months before the expected death of Ms. Novello.]

Call me, Marie. I've been known by several names. It's been changed for me, but 'Marie' is how I'm known now. It's how my persona is recognized. Well, it changes where I am and who I'm with, which language I'm speaking and what I'm playing. Over the years I've been called: a protégé, the 'young Welsh pianist', the Lady Paderewski, the English pianist, the *ano* in *Vocellano*, the world-famous *pianist*.

How would I like to have my death recorded? Oh, that's easy, Marie Novello, also known as Marie Novello Williams, to avoid any confusion in the legal papers. On my tombstone? Professional pianist and daughter of William Thomas Williams, also known as Gwilym Tâf.

Cofia i bwy ti'n perthyn. Remember to whom you're related. That's what my Dada would say to me when I'd be leaving... he'd always send me off with that thought. To some it might sound like...oh, behave yourself as someone in the village will know to who you are... don't embarrass yourself or your family. It doesn't take much to link a connection when you're Welsh, whether in Wales or

* Spirit, Death.

overseas, I've found. It's a big world, but the lines back to our small country are fast. For me, that's not how I took Dada's words. They were so very precious, especially when I was taken away. To me, they were, 'remember us and know that you are truly loved'.

Which image would I like printed? Oh, this one. I think it's *Me* as Marie Novello, taken on board the White Star on my way to New York. Rather glamorous, don't you think? ... black and white, although I know you can do colour processing now, but this was taken by a photographer for the Bain News Service. It was in newspapers from Chicago to New York ahead of my concert tours back in 1922-23. It was an amazing time that changed my life... had some extra copies made for my family. That fur coat and hat will go to my cousin, Hilda May, but the Ermine stole is for my sister, Lily... the real thing... very expensive. Ermine is the fur in the coronation robes of the King and Queen, you know. It was a gift from an admirer. Yes, there have been many!

An example? Oh, some years ago, a Canadian admirer proposed to me...turned him down, of course. We'd met at one of those soir e evenings in New York. Now that's a city that knows how to party! Thankfully, I had the right clothes for the events, lots of silk gowns...anyway, that season in Manhattan he seemed to be at every party and gathering I attended... I'd look around and there he'd be...he just wouldn't accept that I wasn't interested...it was a bit unnerving... but then he finally got the message when he heard me play the piano in concert. It was a marvellous recital at the Town Hall...Paderewski himself was in the audience, mind you...we'd met before in Vienna ...anyway, back to Bob...that was his name...well, Robert really, but he wanted to be relaxed about these things as he was set on marrying me the day after the recital, he told a friend of mine, and I'll never forget his words. She told me 'word for word' what he said...

'Perhaps, after all it's just as well that she wouldn't have me. From the way that she caressed that instrument, I realised that I could never be first in her affections.'

Funny, I've been thinking about him a bit lately...and what I'd be doing now if I'd married him. Probably would have lost my career, although it's over now anyway... but I'd worked too hard to give it up!

Separation? I've been very fortunate in my life, but it didn't always feel that way, especially when I was taken from my family. Had it not been for my talent and

the support of my mother and father, and *wmw* Roderic, I might have entered domestic service at thirteen – that’s how it was for my cousin Hilda.... so thankfully, I became a successful, professional woman travelling the country and overseas with ease. I’ve never taken any of it for granted mind...

What would I like to say? ...Hmm...my hands have always done the talking. It’s how it’s always been, really ... a thought would come to my mind, and they’d express it – be my interpreters, in a way. Even as a child, it never occurred to me that everyone else wasn’t that way. I’d hear a tune, be able to repeat it and remember it. Once I’d hear it, I had it forever.

Mama said that I was only three or four when they first noticed. Dada had taken me with him on a trip into town, and we went to, what I thought of then, an ‘Aladdin’s cave’. It was full of musical treasures. We rode the street trolley there – the number eleven – I remember because we went back so many times after that first day. Dada thought he’d be offered a better price if he took his youngest child with him. It worked, and my life changed.

I was small for my age and my blonde hair was very light, almost like snow....I’ve got a photo here somewhere ... my blue eyes were like clear crystals, not clouded as they are now. And I had ringlets. My gran would wash my hair in a bowl, and then tie it tight into rags to dry. Oh, she was none too gentle, I can tell you!

I was quite shy... if anyone tried to talk to me or fuss over me. I’d be tongue tied...truth be told, I had a bit of a lisp. It’s gone now, but it still slips in sometimes when I’m very tired. My slurring isn’t all due to the morphine..ah...

So... the trolley dropped us...Dada and me... at the bottom of High Street, near the castle. Dada held on tight to his manuscripts and me. The place where we were going was in the middle of the street row with a large double-frontage – bay windows on either side of a solid wooden door with thick glass in the top half....green and red glass. The sign above the store said, ‘Snell & Sons, the Largest Welsh Music Stockist in the World’. We walked through the door and a bell on a hook jangled above our heads. Our arrival had been announced!

There were a few ‘customers’ in the shop but I couldn’t tell you anything about them, even back then....ah, Moonlight Sonata...ah...you see, it was there that I first heard it.

It was mesmerising, and so very beautiful. I’d never heard anything like it....but, it was as if I was meeting family. I had it....I knew exactly what my ‘friend’

was going to say next....and I had to join in the conversation. My fingers started to twitch, as they often did, but there was no resistance for anything to happen. On the corner table... there was a large bellows-looking contraption, as it seemed to me, with a big needle passing over the black disk. It was a phonograph ... an early gramophone and, as I'd learn later, Paderewski was playing Beethoven's, *Moonlight Sonata*. The melody flowed and rang out from the keys of his piano, swirling round the shop...I can still hear it now...as I was then... entranced... I was in my own world, my own enchanted world.

And just then...as I was becoming so very comfortable in it... the tall gentleman with the stiff collar and black tie lifted the needle. The music stopped. He and Dada needed to do some negotiating, but nothing had stopped in my head.... the music kept going.

And that's when I saw it. What would become my best friend for life. Not that particular model, of course, but many of its kin. That one was a very large brown-iron German upright piano with two brass candlestick holders in the front.

I climbed up on to the bench...I was still small... and put my hands on the keys. My fingers found where they needed to go – and without any announcement or fanfare, they started to play the 'Moonlight', from the beginning. The melody rang through, even though my hands weren't big enough to play the arpeggio chords. They rolled and rolled, notes and phrases tumbling towards cadences that didn't close until my hands came to the point where the record had stopped. My mind didn't know any more but the ride had been wondrous – my magical fingers playing Moonlight.

I'm sure that my rendition was a bit clumsy that day, but I understood it – and so, it seemed, did everyone else in the shop. I'd never studied the score, nor had I played the piano. There was a melodium in the chapel... I'd watch Dada play for the *Ysgol Gân** but that was about it... I've played that same piece many times...far more elegantly but maybe not as eloquently as that day in that shop... it was where my voice was really heard. On that day, my hands found their way, and they've been doing that ever since.

Ah, dear Mr. Snell... the gentleman in the wing collar shirt liked to say that I was discovered in his shop...in a way he was right... and my hands have talked, sung and screamed their way around the world since then.

Hmm...

* Singing school

Would you like some tea? It's 'Robin's Tea'. Mama bought some for me after she saw an advertisement in the Glamorgan Gazette that said 'Drink Robin Tea...and keep your pecker up'. Charming thought, isn't it?

But I've always been a Llwyni girl really – *what's that?* – oh, another name for Maesteg area – I left as a child, but it's still part of me. I've worn the finest clothes and jewellery...when you've played in Paris...well, it's where my love for... and mixed with high society and royalty, and performed on the world stage – but my heart is home, even if my head knows differently...we'd shop things on *appro* then.. so many people talk about the culture of the Rhondda Valleys, but it was just as impressive in the Llynfi – maybe more so, as the tradition was even older. Maesteg oozed with music.

Who took me from there? Oh, it was dear *Wncwl* Roderic.

'The girl's got real talent,' *Wncwl* Roderic told Dada. 'I'm sure of it'... *Dere nawr*...he said...otherwise, she'll end up in 'service' in a few months' ...she'll be thirteen...I'll take her there ...what have you got to lose?'

So, we went to Cardiff...*wncwl* Rod and I... and I was in my 'Sunday best'...on the train we went, from Maesteg station...down the Llynfi valley to Bridgend, and then along the Main Line to Cardiff. It was a busy place then...Maesteg had a lot going on, but Cardiff, well, there were people everywhere, and from the world over it seemed to me. We walked from the station along the river *Tâf* to Cathedral Road. It was all so grand...and such big houses. That's where she lived.

Madame Clara Novello Davies... you've heard of her, I'm sure. She's Ivor Novello's mother. Yes, Ivor Novello, star of the West End stage and the new talking movies.

Anyway, back then, Madame Clara was one of Wales' most renowned musicians, and a voice teacher based in Cardiff. She was also conductor of the famous Royal Welsh Ladies Choir...Looking back, meeting her was the most important event of my professional life, and she transformed my world.

Number eleven, Cathedral Road. *Llwyn yr Eos* ... Nightingale Grove...so aptly named for a house full of singing and music-making.

A movie star...that's what she was like, to me – that first time I saw her – dressed in such elegant, fine clothes, jewellery, and she wore perfume! Not the oil of violets that I was used to with the mine manager's wife. It was a lot more delicate...it was much later that I understood that it was French perfume. It was a delicate Jasmin scent...she bought it in Paris. I went there with her, a few years later...Paris... I've still got a bottle, there on my dressing table ...

She was a large lady with a big personality. 'Down-to-earth' she was with me though, and she asked me to play the piano for her – so I just sat down and played everything I'd learned from *Wncwl* Roderic and Dada. Debussy, *Clair de Lune* as gracefully as I could manage, and Rameau's *Gavotte*, flowing and elegant she said, and, of course, the *Moonlight Sonata* – all three movements...though I nearly lost control in the third movement...my excitement almost got the better of that *Presto*.

They had been 'test pieces' for the local *eisteddfodau*...they are adjudicated festival competitions, they're very popular and important in Wales... I'd won them all ...even the National...the prize money that I earned when I won those competitions had come in very handy, so Mama said later.

Madame Clara gave me a lesson there and then, on the *Presto*, and, all of a sudden, things made even more sense. The passages that I'd practiced over and over, then...well, they just flowed. A natural student, she said. My playing soon advanced...or deepened...I could so better express how the music made me feel.

Since I was small for my age, people often thought I was much younger...ha...we made the most of that later...well, throughout my career, really...Madame Clara ... *Mam* ...was so good about how to portray me ... I didn't claim to be anything I wasn't but, if they thought I was a 'child' prodigy, then so be it!

And so, my regular lessons began. Dada was writing as many songs and choral arrangements as he could sell to the publishers as extra money to pay for my lessons and the trips to Cardiff.

After a while, Madame Clara wrote to my parents and said that I would have a much better chance to concentrate on a musical career if I lived in the 'environment' that her home and studio afforded. And so, she invited me to become one of her family's circle, and my parents, as Madame Clara still says, 'wisely agreed'. She adopted me, you could say. In return, I was to supervise the young Ivor's playtime. He was three years old then. Coming from a family of six children as I did, I knew all about looking after my four younger sisters, and my brother was only a year older than me... but really, looking after Ivor was a real joy

– we became great friends and I think I was like an older sister to him. That’s what he said anyway, and we’ve been close all our lives. It’s always been that way ... and will be until my last breath.

Hmm...such an apt thought...he was here earlier, Ivor. He’s always been so sensitive. Sat just where you’re sitting... couldn’t stop crying...though he tried to hide it...hmm.

Living and studying with *Mam* gave me the time and the opportunity to practice – and that was the joy of my life. I played for eight hours every day, and I was happy doing it.

As Madame Clara’s protégé, I was exposed to a very different and diverse lifestyle. The discipline and hard work of being a pianist were framed by the constant music-making of ‘Llwyn yr Eos’, competitions, eisteddfodau, festivals and performances. I won over a hundred prizes at eisteddfodau as well as the *Érard* Gold Medal, you know...

And all this combined with the sophistication and Society names of the world in which Madame Clara mixed.... oh boy, she knew how to mingle and promote herself ... it’s how I learned ... ‘keep moving and talking’, she’d say. ‘If you get stuck, come back to me for a minute and then go off again.’ I soon lost my shyness...though I’m still a bit of an introvert...I went with her, and Ivor ... did you know she had home studios in Cardiff, London, and even New York. And though I missed my Mama and Dada, and the girls back in Maesteg dreadfully, it was still very exciting!

Mam, that’s what Madame Clara wanted me to call her. And then she changed my name -

‘Maria, we do need to change your name,’ she said to me early on. ‘Maria Williams won’t stand out – it’s not memorable – we can’t make you famous with that name.’

Back then I was called Maria after my aunt, not pronounced like the Italians and Spanish say it with the stress on the ‘ee’, but rather with the accent on the first ‘a’ – the Welsh way.

‘Let’s call you Marie,’ she said. ‘It’s a shorter sound, closer to your name but still with a Celtic flair, and also an English lilt to it. And then for a bit of the exotic, we’ll add in “Novello” for name recognition.’

And that’s how the stage name of Marie Novello Williams came about, and from there, ‘Marie Novello’ was created. Over time, I became the name.

Yes, it took a while to feel the name, but professionally it was an adventure... the more I was called Novello, the more it stuck for me...was strange not to have my own family name...but Dada helped...around the same time, he and Mama named my youngest sister after *me*... Annie *Novello* Williams.....family..hm...

What else did I learn? The lessons that one learns as a child stay with you for life, I think. Madame Clara...*Mam* ... wrote words that have stayed with me... and they've kept me going through some shaky times, especially lately...the title says it all... 'The Song of Success' ... that's what she called it. Let me see if I can still declaim it in her 'posh', confident voice -

The Song of Success

There is one thing in Life that we'd all like to attain;
It is sought by everyone who isn't futile or insane.
In seeking it, we often cause ourselves and others pain.
But this magic thing – Success – will draw us ever and again.
There is one little muscle that affects your whole career;
By developing the strength of it an upward course you'll steer.
It doesn't matter what you are – a milkman or a Peer –
You're bound to be successful if you get this method clear.
It's the Success muscle, your Success muscle,
Use it and you can't go wrong.
Breathe with it, talk with it, sing with it, walk with it,
In everything it makes you strong.
It's the Success muscle, your Success muscle,
Use it and you can't go wrong.

Good, eh?

What did I like to play? Early on, as an accompanist, I had a sound knowledge of Welsh vocal music...*Mam* had special arrangements made for her choir when I was the accompanist...but as a solo pianist, my programmes, I think, or I hope...have always shown my passion for the dynamic, vibrant music of the Romantic era – the virtuoso repertoire needing strength, dexterity and sensitivity.

Wind up the gramophone for me, would you? The records I'd like you to hear, my playlist if you will, are in that mahogany cabinet. There's my recording of

Claire de Lune. I love the delicacy, elegance and sheer beauty of French music. It's transporting – it takes me to a higher plane. That was one of the first gramophone recordings that I made for Edison Bell. It takes me back to Paris.

Funny you should ask when did I think of myself as a pianist?

It was in Paris. Oh, such a sophisticated city: Have you been? *Très élégante*, like the music. Well, the first time I went to Paris? Oh, only sixteen years old and played at the World's Fair ... in 1900... the new century.

Mam took me to play for her choir, the Royal Welsh Ladies Choir...strange word, 'took'... as I worked for her and she paid me, as she did all the singers. Fancy getting paid real money for playing the piano. I accompanied the choir's performances in Paris at the *Exposition Universelle*... have always tried not to be labelled as an accompanist, been a solo performer or ensemble player all my career after all, but that first time in Paris was special. It was breathtaking. The place was bursting with new things...ah...the *Art Nouveau* movement was on display everywhere...it was the theme for the Exposition...

We were performing in the British Pavilion ... but it was the Austrian Pavilion that would shape my career...Funny how these things happen and change your life...It was at the Austrian Pavilion that I first heard Maestro Theodore Leschetizky play... he was playing the works of Austrian composers, of course, Mozart, Haydn, Bruckner, Mahler, Schubert and Strauss, and his playing just inspired me so much. And then his students played, and they were amazing....one after the other... *Mam*, of course, knew the Maestro, and once she realized that I was transfixed by his playing, she introduced us.

Maestro Leschetizky didn't speak English, and I didn't speak German. Madame did the translating for us and she asked him, on my behalf, if I could study with him. He asked me to play for him. And I did – I played Schubert's Impromptu in G flat major D899 No.3 for him. That's still one of my favorites. Then he asked me for some Mozart, and I played the Rondo in D major K485. Finally, he asked if there was anything else that I'd like to play for him. Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, No.2 ...He stopped me part of the way through...He was very complimentary but said my left-hand needed strengthening.

Put my record on. It's over there on the gramophone with a blue label.... recorded it years later ...

What did he say? Oh, the Maestro refused to take me on as his student... because I didn't speak German. Oh yes, that was a big blow, but when we got back home to Cardiff, *Mam*, never one to be defeated, found a tutor for me at the University... It took some time, but I did learn to speak German... I think that being able to speak Welsh and having a musician's ear helped with the accent ...so I wrote to the Maestro in German and, *Danke Gott*, he finally agreed to take me on. Well, how could he not!

Vienna? Have you ever been? Oh, it's so grand. Lived there for two years...studying with Maestro Leschetizky at his studio in Vienna between 1905 and 1907... actually was one of his last students. Hard work mind but was thrilling too. The Maestro taught me himself... what a genius...he didn't pass me off to some of his students, as he did with other pianists in his studio. He was a great believer in the shared experience of learning – so I'd also 'sit in' on the lessons of other students...and then we'd have recitals for each other, and the Maestro would critique the performance...Paderewski was one of his students... you know, the 'Glamorgan Gazette' once called me 'the Lady Paderewski' – I took that as a great compliment. I didn't meet Paderewski in Vienna, but years later he came to my concert in New York...and after the performance, he came to a special soirée at *Mam's* house on West 67th Street. But in Vienna, Maestro Leschetizky introduced me to his friends as *a young Brahms*...can you imagine?

Have you been to Vienna? No? You should go!

I'll never forget my first tram ride through the centre of Vienna...it ran on electricity, not horse drawn...the wide boulevards and the elegant buildings...the people out walking in the parks...Rathaus and City Parks...the sculptured gardens...the cobbled streets...everywhere, it was so clean and white...the street lights at night...and the cafés with delectable delights...nothing like that in Maesteg... and of course, all the culture...the museums and the art galleries...the new artists of the time...Klimt...Vienna's the city where the masters composed and played...Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert, Brahms, Strauss ...

It was the making of the artist in me, and in many ways, the professional lady.

Look! Let me put it this way... the people of Vienna, and, all over the Continent really, I think, live in just a... a musical atmosphere... and there, musical talent...such as myself... command an introduction into the best society...always....and as I found... it's so much easier to acquire true artistic perfection there ...yes, more than in our own country....in Vienna, one seemed to breathe in music wherever you went, and across on the Continent...well, that was my experience...then, and over the years since.

You ask about Welsh musicians? Yes, we have had plenty of talent in Wales, but it's not allowed to soar higher than a certain level of mediocrity, I feel.

What do I mean by that? For me, it's that intense application, properly directed...it's essential if one is to reach... and touch the higher flights of the ladder of perfection. Truly, few of the world's talented musicians, and especially pianists, are privileged with opportunities for it... I always worked very hard yet was never content...that's another necessity of an artist.

In those days, when I came back from Vienna to Cardiff...in 07-08...there were just a few lady pianists on the world stage... before then, there had been Essipoff and Carreno...Anna or Annette Essipoff was the Maestro's second wife...from Russia...and Teresa Carreno...from Venezuela...they're both long gone now. Back then though...there wasn't anyone of that stature...and it was my aim to fill the gap.

So, when I came back from Vienna to Cardiff, on Madame Clara's advice, I moved from Wales to London – Maida Vale and Marylebone. It wasn't easy... again being so far from my family in Maesteg... Mama and Dada ... Wales has, and will always, be in my heart, but my art had the front seat, always... it was what I had to do to be a professional pianist.

By the way, I've kept all my clippings.

The newspapers and magazines of the pre-war years...they had copious listings, notices and reviews of my recitals, shared concerts, music hall and festival appearances and Society events throughout Britain...we made sure of it... I was carving out a niche, and we told everyone about it... the English press lapped it up!

My London debut was a series of three recitals at Bechstein Hall in 1907, 1909-10. It was covered in *The Sunday Times* – read it to me, would you? It's there in the scrapbooks...the green one...that's it...

‘Wales has sent us many fine singers, but, save for a few harpists, her output of instrumentalists has been remarkably small, and this gave much interest to the debut of Miss Marie Novello. The young pianist studied under Leschetizky and has acquired the strong and confident execution of his school, but she has a great deal more - the temperament and personality that are of grace.’

‘of grace’ ... Dada liked that phrase, I remember...go on, read the last part...

‘Miss Novello plays with tremendous vitality, the exuberance of which sometimes leads her into undue emphasis, but she can also phrase with engaging delicacy in a cantabile passage. And all through her work runs the golden thread of earnestness.’

‘The golden thread of earnestness’ – yes, that’s me. Nothing can be taken for granted or left to chance. I learned that with *Mam* when we were preparing for a competition or an eisteddfod.... everything was rehearsed... the bow, the walk backward to applause, the encore...and always thinking the words ‘thank you’ while accepting the applause...

Read on, there’s another one there from the Western Mail, I think.... Dada sent me the clip ...he’d seen it in *Maesteg*...he was so proud.... yes, that’s the one... the one written by the London correspondent...it was for readers in Wales. Start where Dada marked it...

‘A full audience, critics and connoisseurs being present in goodly numbers, Miss Novello Williams began with Tausig’s arrangement of Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor... In the Beethoven sonata (op. 57) the Celtic temperament was suggested by the rare feeling with which the sentiment of the slow movement was realised. After a couple of Chopin examples, Schumann's "Carnival" (op. 9) engaged the *pianiste*, and formed the tour de force of the programme, its manifold aspects being brought out with unfailing skill. The supreme touches which go to distinguish the work of the finest executants seem already to be present in a considerable degree...She was at her best in passages calling for delicacy of touch

and refinement of feeling.⁴

I was on my way up ... my international career was launched...things were so busy then, I remember.... I was only twenty-three years of age ... and I loved playing the classics and the mainstream rep, but I had the sense that I should include new music...maybe because I'd seen Dada write and publish... once when I was playing at the Aeolian Hall, I included compositions by Julian Clifford, Arthur Friedlander and Hubert Bath and so they were in the press, labelled as first performances, '*received interpretations quite in accordance with their merit*' ... like all new music, it can be a bit of a hit or miss, but I always received more attention in the newspapers. And when I got tired of playing the Music Halls...I slipped in some new Scriabin...it worked, the Confetti page of *The Lady's Pictorial*...had my photograph in the middle and the caption read that 'the well-known pianist...introduced Scriabin on the "halls" by playing his Nocturne at that Victoria Palace...Miss Novello is Welsh...has extraordinary executive ability, which has earned her the highest praise'.⁵

Ah, now I feel so sad, the war... the Great War... broke out... the one to end all wars...and we all had to do our part... Ivor was drafted but he wasn't a very good soldier... such a free spirit...he's always 'marched to his own beat' ... didn't like to be told what to do and when to do it...not good in the military...and, of course, there was that side that he wasn't to show there...I'd have to be his 'escort' – his 'plus one' as the Yanks say - at some of the grand occasions ... but he did pen the song, 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' ...to rally morale on the home front...you must know the tune, I'm sure... he shot to fame through it.

I did my part for the effort... performing at fundraising events all over the country ...I'll never forget one...it was a St. David's Day matinée at the London Coliseum...London's biggest stage then... Mrs. Lloyd George asked me to play...and I wore the costume...it was 1917 ... in aid of the 'Comforts for the Welsh Troops Fund'...I was listed in *The Tatler* – 'The Passing Shows' section... 'Miss Marie Novello is the famous Welsh pianist, and is appearing in her national costume' not easy playing with a tall beaver hat on my head...thankfully

⁴ *The Glamorgan Gazette*, Maesteg Section, May 10, 1907.

⁵ *EVE - The Lady Pictorial*, August 21, 1921 p240.

the picture they carried in the middle of the page was one of my staged headshots with the pearls....

And, of course, there was Buckingham Palace...I played in the presence of King George and Queen Mary...such a regal couple...it was a good thing that *Mam* had taught me how to curtsy...I played Rachmaninov - Prelude in C sharp minor...I recorded it later (1920) – the Winner label...put it on for me. It's so powerful and rousing...and deeply moving ...I do love my *Romantics* ... it was a great story to use later ... the Palace... when we did my post-war press kits – when they went to America. As one said, '*Miss Novello keeps among her most treasured possessions a very beautiful crown and cypher brooch which was given to her by her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace.*'

The Americans loved it!

Ah, you ask about Maesteg? Yes, I toured all over Wales really, and I played a lot in Cardiff, and a few times for Madame Adelina Patti. The last time in Maesteg was a mix of emotions for me. It was a big party – the chapels, the works, Dada's choirs, and the entire family – they were all there, even *Wncwl* Roderic and his choir from Cardiff. When was it – I can tell you exactly, it was 1917 – it was a 'goodbye' concert for Dada and Mama. They were moving to South Africa to live with my brother ...he had a drapery business ... Dada died out there, Mama came back home. And I'm so glad that she's here now.

Looking the part?

I'm passionate about fine clothes and elegant deportment. Take a look in the wardrobe over there...I've kept everything...I've got photographs of all my gowns...they're mostly in silk with beading brought in from France.

I think that if you're a performer, you owe it to your public to look the very best that you can – on and off the stage. We didn't have much money when I lived at home in Maesteg, but Dada always 'turned out' for his concerts – stiff collar and white tie, and his shoes or boots always had a high shine. If he ever saw a man with unpolished shoes or boots, he'd say, '*Pen punt a tin dime!*' Let's say, he wasn't complimentary about the overall look!

I bought materials for silk dresses and gowns, and the beading that would accentuate the bodice. There are two sisters that have a very fine *haute couture* business here in Marylebone, in the next street. They do some beautiful work. They

made the dress that I wore when I played for the King and Queen Mary at Buckingham Palace.

Mam didn't want us to wear tight fitting dresses. She was unconventional that way – she didn't wear corsets! She would advocate that her students, especially the singers, should wear loose clothing so that they could breathe freely. Although I was a pianist, she'd taught me to breathe properly, and to be aware of my breathing, so that my body didn't tighten up and my playing would remain relaxed and not fight against myself. She also encouraged us to smoke cigarettes ...she said the smoke would relax the voice and the body.

[A bad coughing fit.] Not sure she was right there -

My headshots were taken by no ordinary photographers...they were from Bassano Ltd 'the leading royal and high society portrait photographer in London'. And then there was 'Photographic News' - 'a model establishment of the West End'... Ivor used them a lot, and 'The Dover Studios', he always said that they were 'one of the leading firms specialising in theatrical portraiture'. My portfolio is here – see for yourself. There are a lot of photographs in this box.

As a performer, you've always got to be working the image... 'the foremost female pianist in Europe!' that's what *The London Daily News* called me. Well, that's not all of it. What they actually said was 'the foremost female pianist in Europe - since Carreno'. That's quite a statement, don't you think - and I took that as an absolute compliment... anyway it does help me now. My playing, and my career, will be a link to the next generation...I regret that I haven't done much teaching, but there's no time for that now.

Correct deportment and discipline ingrained in me by Madame Clara... she'd say with great clarity,

'Remain motionless in the last mood of your song,
until the final note dies away.

Bow a graceful and gracious acknowledgement of applause,
mentally saying *Thank you*.

In going off, take a backward step or two,
here turning with easy grace and
walking off in a natural manner.

If the audience still applauds,

come back and bow a couple of times,
again
mentally
thanking them.'

Funny thing, her directions seem to have prepared me for my last moment... as much as possible...well, except the part about walking off...and bowing... when my time comes...bowing out, just the same...the silence...a curtain closing... my hands still, coated in dust, maybe.

Sorry, I didn't mean to get maudlin on you. I've made my peace...as long as I can still speak, I want to tell you my story....a legacy? Maybe...of my work...for my family's sake...

I've always loved to travel. I think I got that from Dada. He travelled too, you know...He had a marvellous tenor voice... a Welsh tenor... high and lyrical ... almost, I imagine, as a nightingale. It could cut through the darkness and bring light to your soul. He sang all over Wales, and when things were tough in Maesteg before the War, (the strikes were bad in the Valleys in '13)... he went off to America and sang his way from coast to coast....his letters came from all the states, with money for Mama. I've got his diary... was due to go to South Africa last year doctor told me not to go ... would have liked to have seen where Dada's buried ... yes, he passed away out there... or as Dada would have said... 'chlywith e mo'r gwcw heno'.*

Lucky for me that Mama came back from South Africa... More tea? I'll ring for Lily.

America! Now that's the place to go... although I've played in Vienna and Paris... in Germany, Canada ... but America is very special to me.

Three concert tours I did there ... in '21, '22 and '23. They were tremendous experiences, and I played concertos with orchestras from Florida to Maine to Ohio and also Toronto, Canada. The tours opened many doors, and I gave some splendid performances, and I met someone very dear... hm.

* He won't hear the cuckoo [sing] tonight.

The reviews were marvellous - *She presided at her instrument like a young priestess of her art* said the Toledo Times, even though I was almost forty at the time!

There were recital debuts to high acclaim in New York's Town Hall, the Waldorf Astoria for the Rubenstein Club, and in Chicago's Playhouse Theater. I met Daniel Protheroe there, by the way. He was nice enough to come to my recital. Next time I was to go there, he was going to invite me to a big event.... Anyway, the Chicago Tribune wrote something... it's there...read it...

New to Chicago. She is Marie Novello whose mother is a personage in the music of England

England – ha!

and whose brother, Ivor is in this country for reasons connected with the screen and the ambulating portraits appearing thereon. She is good looking enough to be in the movies herself, with preference for the color process that should depict her blonde hair and pink gown. As a pianist, she has a personal style and a warmly appreciative attitude for the none too uncommon works of her program.

Chicago Tribune, Jan 22, 1923

The million-dollar country - that's what they call it...America... but take it from me, if you go out there expecting the streets to be paved with gold – you are mightily mistaken. One has to work terrifically hard to get a front place over there, and what is demanded in everybody – writer, artist, singer or pianist – is personality, and the Americans spell it with a capital P!⁶

After my travels there though, I must say that I came back feeling far more confident. America does that for you. The Americans expect the best things, and they get them, just because they have faith and believe in you.

Recital artistes are in demand there and their cinemas are positive marvels in construction. Mind you, England has followed America's lead ... played at the Astoria, London, a most modern picture house...

Recordings and broadcasts? There have been many, a very long list of gramophone recordings on Edison Bell (Velvet Face and Winner series), and it has

⁶ 'Tired of sunshine – Miss Marie Novello on virtues of British climate'

been a grand adventure in technology. Of course, I had to record my own version of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, remembering that time at Mr. Snell's shop.

Last year I recorded on the new HMV label... my last recording.

Arensky's *Étude de Concert in F-sharp major* on one side.

I'd like you to hear it... always been my favourite encore. I've played it at almost every recital, not only because it pleases the audience, but it's a piece of music that I treasure.

Listen carefully.

The lines must *sing* together, effortlessly. The music ripples along and around as excited young streams flow and interweave towards their river's pathway. An ecstasy of sounds.

Listen! Exquisite, isn't it?!

Someone once said that a good message is not always well received due to the sound of the voice that delivers it. I've always tried to ensure that the sonorities of my fingers on the keys made for easy listening as the lilt was easy to receive, no matter the audience. Especially the one that was always in my heart when I performed. You see, I've been a Welsh woman with a cosmopolitan disposition, trying to speak the universal language of music in all its local dialects.

There's a very private part of me in this piece of music – it's all that I've managed to keep to myself ...to remember...a love, a partner...that I could not have by my side or in my bed...

I've always been mindful of image. Take for instance, the radio. At first, I was hesitant of playing for radio, as ...the reproduction of the piano notes in the earphones was so liable to condemn the musician... they'd come through so badly... tinny. Things have altered...perhaps the BBC has improved the microphone, or perhaps the receiving apparatus is more efficient...but mark my words... I am certain that piano playing by broadcasting is now nearly the real thing. I've broadcast live both in New York and London, and as I told the press, broadcasting in England is more advanced than in any other country. The Americans claim to be the first in the field and more advanced in wireless

electricity. It's been my experience that what they claim is one thing, but England seems to me to be so much more reliable.

My 'swan song'... that's what you're asking about! My last big concert? It was recorded... live. It was a performance at the Queen's Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Maestro Bruno Walther. It was a hefty programme; Grieg Concerto in the first half and the Tchaikovsky Concerto in the second ...and, of course, we had a grand celebratory party that Madame Clara threw for me...as she told the reporter that night, '[it was] an almost unheard-of thing for a woman pianist, but Marie's playing was characterised by the strength of a man's touch.'

I knew there was something wrong, even then. My hands were trembling...and they'd always been so very strong...hmm, even my left hand...they thought I had a touch of memory slip. It wasn't that. To me, it was as if the tone of my voice was beginning to lisp...but nobody knew...and we partied that night away...I even had to play a few turns for *Mam's* party...the champagne was flowing!

Regrets? I've been thinking a lot about that question recently, knowing that you'd probably ask me... truly, it's that I didn't allow myself to embrace the love that was offered to me... yes, you guessed it right... an American. We met at a party in New York. Oh, it was so intense, our relationship. Beautifully exhausting. An infatuation, maybe for both of us. We kept it very private, away from the world. No, I won't give you a name, even now. We were together for three wondrous weeks and then it had to end. Two people leading different lives. It was very difficult but there was no choice to be made. Let's leave it at this ... I just couldn't and wouldn't give up my first love. The piano has been my whole identity. My standing and my ambition – music had to be my only passion. It's been my constant love.

This way I'll always be young. No need for a spin on the story...I'll truly be a young Welsh pianist of thirty, tragically dead at forty-four! But don't put my age on the death announcement ... or my grave stone ... simply the date of death. I'll be the young Welsh Lady Paderewski forever ... leave me with a little mystique! Won't you?

Will you excuse me? My voice is hoarse from the strain of talking... I need to rest. Thank you so very much for coming to see me. Come again – soon!

My sister, Lily will see you out. Ask her to come to me, would you?

+ + + +

[Waking from sleep]

Lily? What a strange dream I've had! I saw the most beautiful stream, and it was singing. It wasn't like the black, industrial waste waters of the *Llynfi* in Maesteg or the tidal Thames, but more like the slow rippling flows of the *Llynfi* near its source high above Caerau. It was foggily enchanting, a blue green swirl rising in mists of otherworldliness. A crossing place, maybe, but it wouldn't let me cross over. The *galwad**, but the keeper of the crossing would not let me through.

'First answer my song rhyme' he said, and he waited for me to sing the right song line. Otherwise, he said, my soul would swirl in oblivion.

And so, I sang – I went through my repertoire - every great melody that I'd ever played and recorded. Surely one of them would be the right one, but no, nothing fit the requirements. I sang the great Masters – Bach, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Chopin, and others, but they didn't work. None of them had the right key.

They weren't me, he said.

'They play you, but you're not playing them. Look to what is in your soul. What you sing is a technical feat, but not your true artistry. Delve down, deeper still.'

'What are you? Who are you?'

And then, almost in a trance, I hummed the lines. They flowed from me as if my brain had been locked down and my heart given leave to release the measures of my being. The pulsing song braids poured out.

* Calling

Ar lan ben afon... eisteddai glân forwynig... Ond cariad pur, sydd fel y dur, yn para tra bo dau... (and then it came) ..Gwaith yn dy fynwes bert ei thro mae allwedd clo fy nghalon... Tra fo dŵr y môr yn hallt, a thra bo gwallt yn tyfu, a thra fo calon dan fy mron - mi fyddai'n ffyddlon iti;... The Song of the Maid o Cefn Ydfa... the waters parted, and the moonlight shone a silvery pathway through, the air calling me.

But it still wasn't time ...yet...

Promise me, Lily, that at the time of my passing you'll play my record of Arensky's *Étude de Concert*.

And there's one other thing that I'd like you to do for me. Open the box at my bedside. The key is in my piano stool, in a small red pouch. Do you see the long light pink silk sheer scarf with intricately embroidered silver white beading? Yes, that's the one. Exquisite isn't it? I'd like you to drape it around my neck and place the part with the beading in my fingers. It's always been my personal secret. The love that could not be...

And the blue silk clapper dress with the French beading is the one that I'd like to wear when you prepare my body...yes...That was how I was dressed the night of the party in New York. Ours was a love that burned bright and deep, but I couldn't allow it to be, not in this world... I remember many of the young people of Maesteg would want to be married in the Parish Church of Llangynwyd, even if they were chapel. The mysticism and romance of the love song of Wil Hopcyn and Ann Thomas rings through always, even if it has a tragic ending. Their final resting places apart – one inside the church, and one outside in the large graveyard. It's where I'd like to be buried.

You will make sure that they say it right – won't you?

[Wil Ifan speaks]

On the day of her funeral, Marie Novello's coffin, accompanied by a large group of mourners, was carried by train from Paddington Station to Maesteg Cemetery. At the graveside, three famous ministers including myself, a 'distraught mother', family members, and a large crowd. In eulogy -

*Yesterday a packed concert hall, warmth, enthusiasm: today
this bleak mountainside, merciless rain and wind – and clay.*

Magic fingers! *They spoke all the languages of the world
because they had learnt the language of the world's heart. In
the great foreign capitals where so many Britishers are dumb,
her eloquent hand knew no hesitation, and enthusiastic throngs
listened, spellbound. Everywhere men understood the talking of
her hands. Possibly they detected a slight elusive accent, which
was an additional charm. It was the pulsing of Glamorgan
blood in her glowing fingertips, warming an occasional
syllable.*

Shawl of Lullabies ~ *Siôl Hwiangerddi*

[Hwiangerdd, Lullaby: a quiet song used to lull (a child) to sleep;
cradlesong]

*Myfi sy'n magu'r baban...
Yn bwian yn hwy o byd...
O cofied wlad y cennin
Y wlad sydd mor annwyl i mi.
Mae'r gofal i gyd arna i.*

'Tis I who rocks the babe...
Lullabies always...
remember the land of the leek
the country to me so dear.
The care is all mine.

How wondrous is the thought of sound as the first sense of a child, while still in its mother's womb. Some believe the sense of hearing and reacting to messages of stimulation are active as early as forty-four days. The sounds of the mother's voice, heartbeat and rhythm of life, touch the womb along with her anxiety, tension, anticipation, love, joy, as well as the fatigue. All are the threads of the new identity being woven around the unborn child. How often does one see and hear a mother calm the restless 'kicking' of the new life within her with gentle sounds and lilting songs? That which calms the mother-to-be also soothes the soul of the one she carries, wrapping it safely in the rhythm of breath flowing in an unending song: the cyclical song of life, if not yet the person - the song that I am becoming, it sings in response.

One of my fondest photographs of my grandmother is a black and white print showing her holding a baby, the loving swaddling of a new born in a shawl of safety and warmth, the beginnings of family and community being wrapped in a gentle song.

Huna blentyn ar fy mynwes

Clyd a chynnes ydyw hon.

Sleep my child on my breast
Warm and gentle here.

It is the cradle song sung by generations of Welsh families, ‘Sleep my child’.

Unfortunately, far too many babies enter this world with their song already in dissonance with itself. The weave of the song has an ill-woven cloth running through it. It is not that the key change or modulation cannot be worked into the song, but the bridging section is longer, and the tonal centre of the new key is uncertain.

Ni cha ddim amharu'th gyntun

Ni wna un dyn â thi gam.

Nothing will interrupt your sleep
No-one will harm you.

‘No-one shall disturb you or do you harm,’ this part of the song is not so easily applied.

Huna'n dawel, annwyl blentyn

Huna'n fwyn.

Sleep quiet, dear babe
Gently sleep.

The shawl that my grandmother used was really a *carthen*, a blanket of traditional Welsh weave. With the baby or small child wrapped high, close to the chest, the blanket itself is bound around the intertwining bodies, leaving the arms free to work, sure in the knowledge that the ‘precious one’ is warm and secure. The ‘mothering one’ can move around, walk the song and be the rocking cradle.

‘I remember the shawl’s fragrance
in the crook of your shoulder...’

When my grandmother passed away, the tribute that I chose to give was a song, a grand-daughter singing a lullaby to her mother / grandmother in *Cân Merch*

i'w Mam (A Girl's song to her Mother). The song was written by Hilary Tann and Menna Elfyn for me to sing, and premiere. In the embrace of the shawl,

There I'd find a heartbeat like hummingbirds

Take me to vale of feathers,
to the dancing world, my downy one

fy mben ar obennydd
fy nydd ym mblu'r gweunydd
My head on your pillow...
My days filled with...love.

As the daughter of a Minister of Religion, I grew up well accustomed to the rituals of life's passage, and especially of life linked to the Welsh nonconformist church, or more colloquially and fondly known simply as 'chapel'. There were so many times as a child and young person that I bore witness to my father holding a baby wrapped in beautiful Christening robes, the clothes and shawls often passed from one generation to the next, or from one sibling to the next. Often, the Christening shawl had been 'worked' with love as a grandmother, great-grandmother or great-great grandmother's hands had woven the loops and stitches of the crochet shelled shawl into a delicate, white woollen robe – a family heirloom for its newest treasure. Each time, the ritual required that one parent present the wrapped baby to my father. He then, as part of the sacred ceremony, named and blessed the baby, anointing it with drops of water in the sign of the cross. Occasionally this would be accompanied by some baby tears, but often the infant passed through the devotion in quiet sleep. Before handing over the baby to the other parent, usually its mother, my father would ask the congregation to stand and pledge an oath to participate in the 'privilege and responsibility' of supporting the child and family, each of us present being a thread in the expanding shawl around the new baby - a layette for life.

Funnily, my father was also my minister; when I was Christened, he performed both roles with my aunt standing at my mother's side. The members of the chapel – Soar, Llanelli – were standing as my shawl.

In the U.S.A., my status as my father's daughter is better known as 'PK', or the seemingly more politically correct version, as told to me by a Lutheran Pastor, is

‘TO’. The meanings? The ‘preacher’s kid’ is the ‘theologian’s offspring’! But on stage, I’ve been known as the singer of ‘the Welsh lullaby’, the melody that wraps a baby in a shawl of quietening sounds – whether it be an infant or an audience of thousands.

Suo Gân is probably the most well-known Welsh lullaby, simply titled in translation as, ‘Lullaby’. Its origins are unknown but dating back from the 19th century, it has been sung and presented in countless guises the world over. The song has always been in my repertoire but singing it to non-Welsh speaking audiences means that it needs some interpretation or a variation in the lines of its accompaniment. In recent years, I prefer to sing this song unaccompanied, but one of my most memorable performances took place at the Wisconsin Arena in Milwaukee on the shores of Lake Michigan. This is an enormous sports arena, a soul-less cavern turned into a concert hall with staging and lighting and amplified sound, all controlled by unseen engineers at their consoles. Thousands in the audience were expecting a feast of Welsh music to celebrate their heritage. There were many performers on stage this particular night, but my portion was mostly to the accompaniment of the harp, Wales’ national instrument.

*Huna blentyn ar fy mynwes
Clyd a chynnes ydyw hon.
Breichiau mam sy’n dyn amdanat
Cariad mam sy dan fy mron.*

Sleep child on my breast
Warm and tender here.
Mother’s arms around you
Mother’s love beneath my breast.

*Paid ag ofni tôn fach unig
Sua, sua ar lan y môr.*

Fear not the lonely tune
of wave’s wash at sea edge.

It is my way to begin the song as if the baby – the audience – is nearly asleep. It is as if we are having a little chat and a *cwtsh* as the ‘baby’ quietens and goes deeper into sleep. The words slip naturally into humming sounds. Each and every time I sing this song, at its close, I allow a little time for the audience to quietly ‘wake up’ or ‘come around’ after what has been, I hope, a gentle repose.

Mine is a large voice, but one of the press reviews that has given me the greatest sense of satisfaction said, ‘the Welsh voice...that moves from grandeur to intimacy, in a sweeping flourish of soporific murmur’.

Maybe just as treasured was the time that I sang to a crowd of elementary school children in the Northern California coastal town of Eureka. The class had been studying Wales as part of California’s diversity and international programme. Their teacher, Karen Rice, was a descendant of David Richards, one of the leaders of the Rebecca Riots who narrowly escaped capture by stowing away to the United States in the mid 1800s. She had prepared them with stories, songs, dances, and words in Welsh, so that when I arrived, they already had favourites for me to sing. *Suo Gân* was one of them. As the children sat in a circle around me, this time I sang for them unaccompanied. At times, they sang with me, but on this song, they listened.

Huna’n dawel, annwyl blentyn.

Sleep quiet, dear babe

At the end of the last verse, I stopped, and a boy quickly said, ‘On the CD you *hmm* at the end of the song, why did you stop?’ And so, I carried on, and hummed a quiet verse for them. As the last ‘hmm’ of the song died away, the children sat still until the same small boy staring right at me simply said, ‘Cool!’ That was one unforgettable frisson.

That night in Milwaukee, there would be an even deeper significance to that memory. After the magnificent concert, it was time for the *afterglow*, the celebratory party of more informal singing. The spirits were quickly damped though with the breaking news of a terrible motor accident in Paris. Details came through on the hotel’s large television monitors. Diana, Princess of Wales, had been killed. Shock and sadness cloaked the festivities; a princess was now asleep. The rousing songs of festivities were transposed to sombre minor melodies, shared as a collective prayer shawl of shocked mourning.

Huna’n dawel, beno buna...hmm

Ni chaff dim amharu'th gyntun,

Ni wna undyn â thi gam;

Huna'n dawel, annwyl blentyn,...hmm

Huna'n fwyn y tlws (ei) lun.

Sleep quiet, tonight sleep...hm
Nothing will break your repose,
No-one shall harm you;
Sleep quiet, dear child,...hm
Sleep, precious one.

Oftentimes, when I sing in Welsh to audiences in the United States that have never before heard the language, the comment invariably comes afterwards – ‘We thought you were singing in Hebrew. Is it Yiddish? The song sounds like a Jewish prayer! You will need a shawl to go with that song, a Jewish prayer shawl.’

Everyone has an ‘Aunt Mary’: the special lady who knits for the family or makes the holiday cakes or pies or guards the family recipe for Welsh cakes or Bara Brith or keeps the family treasures wrapped in tissue paper deep in scented drawers for celebration events. Just such an Aunt Mary lives in the higher parts of Minnesota, near the Canadian border. Minnesota is the second most northern state after Alaska, and winters can be very harsh. Aunt Mary is from a long line of Welsh folk that are proud to be Welsh-Americans. Now in her mid 90s, Aunt Mary has attended most of the major events that I have sung or conducted in North America. Living in a largely progressive and democratic state, she campaigned for Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential elections (the candidate of Welsh descent). Mary’s grandmother Emma, who read Milton in many languages, was the mother of Sarah, the suffragette who majored in Classics at Denison University in Ohio.

Aunt Mary cans fruit and vegetables, and enjoys her daily cocktail, and tells family stories while knitting and crocheting. Only one member of her surviving family has any real interest in her Welsh story, her niece, Karen, the teacher who lives in California. Mary is the great-grand-daughter of a ‘Rebecca Riots’ leader, and one can imagine her joining in the fight for the oppressed.

During the long hours of caring for my father in his final months, my mother and I received the perfect gift package from Aunt Mary. It contained two beautiful prayer shawls that she knitted, adapting two patterns to suit her needs, tweaking one for a baby’s blanket and the other for a Jewish prayer shawl. To her, the garment is not complete unless the rims are braided with long fringes, just as those that hang on Jewish prayer shawls. One cannot think of a more tedious but necessary part of the process than attaching the fringes, but they are in tribute to

her late husband, Uncle Charlie, who was raised Jewish and devoted to all faiths. The new pattern became Aunt Mary's prayer shawls, woven with Welsh-American love to give comfort when things seem too much to endure: a shelter for times of sorrow, a comfort in the memories cherished, and strength for that which must be done in that moment.

*Fy hudo i gwm plu,
I fyð lleðritb, yn fabli.*

Entice me to the vale of cotton
grass, to magical land, sweet one.

The loss of a parent comes to us all at some point, a major transition that we know will happen, but most of us are never really prepared for the grief that follows.

They say that often, before death, a person will have a tremendous surge of energy. My father certainly did, for all he wanted to do was get up and go out to be with the people waiting and counting on him. 'Your life is not just about you,' he said.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:

My father was heavily sedated in the last days of life and his breathing was very noisy.

'He's not in distress,' the doctor said. 'It's worse for you,' she emphasised as we listened and watched for each inhalation: those noisy gasps that seemed as a roaring tsunami of breaths.

'He can still hear you' – it is the last sense to go. And each of us, in our own way, *sang* our own words to him -

Huna blentyn, nið oes yma

Ddim i rôddi iti fraw;

Gwena'n dawel ...

Ar yr engyl gwynion draw

Sleep child, nothing here
to fear;
Smile peacefully...
On bright angels there.

Finally, the last breath is released into air. The shawl is now a shroud. Don't forget to open the window, someone said. The soul needs to leave. And so, the shroud of death is transformed to a shawl for travel onwards.

On the day of my father's funeral, the last remaining members of the congregation of Soar chapel sat with us as a family in the mourners' pews, again as a shawl fulfilling the *adduned* (pledge). Hundreds stood in respect as the music played the meditative singing of the North American Welsh Choir, my choir, and in the words of the Twenty-third Psalm:

fy ffiol syðð lawn.

Daioni a thrugareðð a'm canlynant ...

a phreswyliaf yn nbŷ yr Arglwyðð yn dragywyðð.

My cup runneth over.
Goodness and mercy follow me...
and dwell in the Lord's house forever.

The *yddatod* (release) was complete, and we, his family, mourned his loss and gave thanks for the life that he had lived, grateful for the Mother's shawl that had gathered up his spirit and sung him home.

Braids of Song

Gwead y Gân

Blending identities, braiding cultures
and weaving songs

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTION

Exposition

The interrelation of identity and culture is a topic of great and growing significance in the globalized world of today. The intermingling of displaced peoples with existing communities is a challenging and complex situation for both sides with positive and negative effects for all. This is not a new phenomenon; it is one that has been around since the beginning of human migration.

Legal immigration opens the door to opportunity. While not guaranteed, there is the potential of a better life for the person in transit. The journey of leaving home and creating a new life inevitably impacts personal identity. This in turn affects and alters the creative output of the individual as well as the surrounding community.

The debate in this critical commentary will take the form of an exploration that may be called braided identities: identities woven from inherited ‘songs’ that have crossed the Atlantic to America and back again to Wales.

This commentary attempts to articulate, analyse and reveal how creative components are enhanced by their cultural and geographical contexts.

Description

The creative work *Braids of Song* acknowledges the preciousness of culture, in particular the music which is able both to cross different linguistic boundaries and to breach those between melody and language itself. The *hwiangerdd* (lullaby), for example, is the infant’s introduction to a blended music and language that express and transcend a specific culture.

The desire to recognise the richness, humanity, and cross fertilisation of cultures and identities that built today’s America is the starting point for *Braids of Song*. Its overarching concerns trace the interrelation between immigration, identity and creativity within a Trans-Atlantic context. Daniel Levitin is one of the many writers to whom I will refer who discuss the significance of the arts, especially the entwined arts of music and writing, to a sense of identity.

Four artists serve as my case studies: the first at the *fin de siècle*, the second and third in the early part of the twentieth century, and the last is myself at the turn of the twenty-first century. I chose to link these very different artists by creatively exploring the impact of death on identities rendered fluid through migration.

The genre of creative non-fiction presented itself as a flexible yet complex form, an ideal conduit through which to express the stories of the real people of this study, both living and departed. I consider the genre, in light of the assessment by Lee Gutkind, as ‘the literature of reality’.⁷

Braids of Song is told through four intertwined narrative strands in a mixture of literary styles; for each of them the strand occurs at a specific moment in time. I drew on the pace and structure of music to frame the braiding of my own identity with those of historical Welsh figures. The three figures whose lives and works I explored were carefully chosen: Dr Joseph Parry, Dr Daniel Protheroe, and pianist Marie Novello. The first is still acknowledged as a pillar of Welsh music; the second is known in Welsh music circles but his contributions are less well remembered; the third is unknown to today’s audience despite the fact that her achievements were internationally celebrated in her time.

Music and Cultural Journeys

This entire undertaking was motivated and influenced by two men, both deceased. The first was my father, the Rev. E D Morgan (d.2015) from Llanelli, Wales and the second was a Welsh-American, Dr D E Jones (1867-1947), from Scranton, Pennsylvania. Both were pivotal in my creative choices: one providing the kernel of an idea with the bequest of a handwritten opera manuscript, and both supplying impetus for its development. The ‘hand holding’ of discovery that came with the personal papers and archival collection of Dr Jones would inspire and fuel the creative journey. His records also enriched my understanding of the brilliance and significance of the three figures I had chosen and of the varied times and communities in which they lived. In this commentary, I will show how these elements led to the creation of the life writing that is *Braids of Song*.

⁷ Lee Gutkind, *You can’t make this stuff up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. (Boston: DaCapo Press-Lifelong Books, 2012), p. 4.

CHAPTER 1: Style and Form

As with all creative work, the key to unlocking this creative project lay in the choice of genre. What began as a series of stories was to coalesce, in a gradual way, into a creative non-fiction collection. Finding an appropriate structure for the presentation of new knowledge and for answering the questions that I was posing was indeed a challenge. The blended collection that is *Braids of Song*, comprised of essays, poems and monologues, was my outcome.

In her essay, *The Writing Life*, Annie Dillard states, ‘Writing every book, the writer must solve two problems: Can it be done? And, can I do it?’⁸ The challenge for me was to combine creative non-fiction with imaginative pieces. What helped me to solve this problem was an experience at the Gettysburg Cyclorama. There, the viewer stands in the middle of the cyclorama room on a raised platform surrounded by a 360-degree three-dimensional representation of the story. The lights and sound move the attention of the spectator to different scenes of the story bringing each, in turn, to life. The eyes and ears are drawn, then focused as spotlights on the different conversations of individual men and women telling their part of the larger story. As an observer, I was both a witness and a participant in the Gettysburg story. At the end of the presentation, the window shutters of the room open up on the fields and grounds that were a turning point in American history. I was inspired to turn this visceral personal experience into multi-dimensional writing.

The reader of *Braids of Song* ‘looks’ both ways, written and aurally, to receive stories from different voices. The first-person narratives move from my voice in *ysgrif* (composition/lyrical essay) to that of my father in conversation, to the poetry of one thought at a time, and to the three different dramatic monologues of lives from the past. Together, these stories take the reader on a journey through both general themes and personal experiences. For, as Gutkind writes,

In some ways, creative nonfiction is like jazz – it’s a rich mix of flavors, ideas and techniques, some of which are newly invented and others as old as writing itself. Creative nonfiction can be an essay, a journal article, a research paper, a memoir, or poem; it can be personal or not, or it can be all of them.⁹

⁸ Annie Dillard, *The Abundance*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2016), p. 110.

⁹ Lee Gutkind, *You can’t make this stuff up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. (Boston: DaCapo Press-Lifelong Books, 2012), p. 6.

It was not my initial intention to include my own story in this creative work, but as the writing evolved, it was, as Annie Dillard writes in *An American Childhood*, ‘that I myself was both observer and observable, and so a possible object of my own humming awareness’.¹⁰

Language and Creativity

In an interview given to the [University of] Stanford Report, Gwyneth Lewis calls English a ‘thinking language’, whereas for her, Welsh is a ‘consensual’ language with words rubbing against each other, softened by mutations, as in music.¹¹ She sees these as sounds used in a small society that ‘can’t assume they won’t see each other again’. As she says, ‘... to think and be musical...an ambition that is a composite one, from both traditions together’, and that Welsh ‘softens going around the corners’ while English ‘tends to make the road straight by force’.¹²

In this creative piece, I opted to freely blend both Welsh and English according to the character of the speakers in order to reveal their personalities, their issues and their concerns. As a first language Welsh speaker, Welsh is my *mam-iaith*. It is a different experience to sing – *canu’r gân neu’r gerdd* - in Welsh than in English. The abundance of soft vowels and crisp consonants express sounds formed in parts of the mouth that are different to English. The emotion held within me flows through without my head realizing it.

For those to whom it is a mother tongue, Welsh is the language of intimacy. Toward the end of his days, my father was far more comfortable when those who cared for him spoke in Welsh. Joseph Parry would have spoken only Welsh to his father and English to his wife and colleagues. The turn of phrase changes, the lilt, the pace of speaking all fed into the cadences of his music. Daniel Protheroe, who also lived in America, spoke Welsh with a fluency and accuracy that he prided himself for doing. It is significant that the weekly letters he wrote to his brother were in Welsh. While he corresponded in English with his Welsh-American friend, Dr Jones, he slipped into Welsh for the gossip or private asides, suggesting it was a continuing association with home. In sharp contrast, and in order to be accepted, Marie Novello developed her English-speaking voice to blend with the

¹⁰ Annie Dillard, *The Abundance*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Books 2016) p. xx.

¹¹ Cynthia Haven, ‘Welsh poet at Stanford: Small languages make a big difference’, Stanford Report, January 7, 2010.

¹² Ibid.

sophisticated world in which she moved. Yet, she too returned to the intimacy of the Welsh language on her deathbed. In all these cases, the complex woven fabric of the two languages expresses the development of a creative mixed identity, as a braider of songs.

From the viewpoint of both storyteller and singer, it seemed fitting that songs spur the telling of my own story. They shaped my journey with the people and places that inspired me to find my own voice as an immigrant in a vast new land. Along the way, I was profoundly affected when meeting other migrants (past and present), who had both embraced and struggled with the question of identity. I worked with song as the healer of ailments both known and unknown, the song sheet itself supplying new ideas. The music enhanced my self-expression, giving voice to a new element of my creative self.

Carl Sandburg, who braided his Swedish identity with his adoptive American one, notes that his *American Songbag* is ‘a ragbag of strips, stripes, and streaks of color from nearly all ends of the earth’.¹³ In the iconic collection of that name, songs ‘have roles ... Often a song is a role’. Sandburg believes the singer,

acts a part... [for] she is a story-teller of a piece of action...[and] each is sung differently in different places,

demonstrating the complex permutations of an ever-evolving identity. I took a similar approach to my Welsh-American ‘songbag’, seeing it as both the soundtrack and sound effects of my story. I decided to use ‘song’ or particular pieces of music as the themes or leitmotifs to help tell the tales of my own personal writings as well as to highlight the works and journeys of the three musicians in monologue.

The poems of *Braids of Song*, both original and found, serve as signposts or bridge pieces, joining one story to the next. They create an intimate voice, a shard of sound singing one snippet of melody at a time and, in so doing, connect the tunes to the soul.

In the found poems, I stripped documents and evidence down to the essential facts.¹⁴ In doing so, the process reminded me of a music theorist examining a

¹³ Carl Sandburg, *The American Songbag* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927), pp. vii & ix.

¹⁴ Found poem: ‘a poem consisting of words found in a nonpoetic context (such as a product label) and usually broken into lines that convey a verse rhythm’. (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

piece of composition through a system of Schenkerian analysis: the agonizing over notes in order to pinpoint only those very few that are the fundamental basis to the

message, with no embellishments allowed.¹⁵ I was also guided by Edith Wharton's belief that, 'One of the chief obligations [of the writer] ... is to give the reader an immediate sense of security. Every phrase should be a sign-post.'¹⁶ In this way, the poems serve as a *siôl o sicrwydd* (a shawl of certainty) for the mixed collection.

¹⁵ Vincent Duckles, Jann Pasler, Glenn Stanley, and others, 'Schenker's theory presents itself as both a universal theory of tonality and a sophisticated tool of analysis by which an individual piece of tonal music may be opened up for inspection and its individuating features of harmony, form and thematic content delineated with unprecedented precision'. (Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press. January 01, 2001) [2 Aug. 2018]
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046710>>.

¹⁶ Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1925), p. 37.

CHAPTER 2: Creativity, Immigration and the Rich Complexity of Braided

Identity

Neuroscientist and musician, Daniel Levitin in *The World in Six Songs* claims that music is ‘a core element of our identity as a species’, one that paves the way ‘for more complex behaviours such as language, large-scale cooperative undertakings, and the passing down of important information from one generation to the next’.¹⁷ In the following section just such a transference occurs.

Arianwen: Welsh in an American Context

Arianwen. It all began with her name: the white silver or silvery white threads of a story. The threads, or subjects are the questions I posed throughout this creative and critical undertaking. This tale could be set anywhere in the world, in any culture, and yet it is Welsh. And also, American.

Arianwen concerns two young lovers who despite the odds marry and are celebrated by the people of their village. It is a happy-ever-after tale where right prevails. The libretto, in English with tones in Welsh folk song, was written for home audiences in Wales, England and America.

The manuscript that was bequeathed to my family as one of my father’s treasured items, is in fact, as I discovered after deep research, a national heirloom for Welsh Opera. In the opera manuscript, Joseph Parry raises his flag in music by choosing one country over the other, showing where his greatest love lies. It is the country with which he identifies, Wales, rather than the opportunities of the one to which he also has rights of citizenship, America. The opera reveals pride and spirit of a nation’s writer in its notes and stories, drawing his lines of connection between country and home.

Music and Identity

In *The Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin writes that the definition of one’s own country is the ‘place in which I do not have to ask’.¹⁸ And yet he also notes that to feel at home in that country is dependent on being able to leave it.

Daniel Protheroe from Ystradgynlais, Wales, embraced American citizenship (1893), but his song lines reveal that while he physically left the country of his

¹⁷ Daniel Levitin, *The World in Six Songs* (London: Aurum Press 2009), p. 3.

¹⁸ Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 56.

birth, he did not forget the place that he left. In the simple melodies of the songs written to boost American morale on the home front during World War I, there is a ‘Welshness’ to his patriotic approach. The Calvinist Methodist chapel upbringing shines through as Protheroe relies on words that unite behind the flag, rather than on a warmongering vocabulary vilifying the enemy. The chorus of his song, *Our Flag*, with text by C W Augustus, marches along almost like a ‘Band of Hope’ event with,

Then hurrah for the Red, White and Blue!
The banner so grand to the view;
It’s unvanquished in fight,
And it floats in its might
O’er the hearts of its people so true.¹⁹

The Turkish author, Elif Shafak wrote,

When you move to a new country because you have an irrational urge to do so, it is a secular act of faith ... If you’re in a self-imposed exile, it is sad but enriches you intellectually and spiritually.²⁰

Shafak goes on to say that ‘imagination is a desire to transcend boundaries. When we write, we can be multiple’.²¹

Protheroe has a role in this musical assertion of a multiple mixed identity bound together but not crushed by the flag. This attitude had enormous resonance at a time of fascist stirrings with openly far-right processions in Washington, D.C. in 1925 and later in New York in 1927.²² Protheroe was making a claim for the inclusiveness and preciousness of culture, something that resonates throughout *Braids of Song*.

The recovery of national heirlooms that testifies to this legacy of inclusivity under the flag is of vital significance now, as then. *Arianwen* was the treasure my father gave me which led to this doctoral journey. His was a parting gift of great significance, for as Abe Lincoln said, ‘My best friend is a person who will give me

¹⁹ Dancil Protheroe, *Our Flag, a simple patriotic lay* (Winnetka: C W Augustus, 1917).

²⁰ Kate Kellaway interviews Elif Shafak, ‘The Turkish novelist on reclaiming faith from religion, her love for Istanbul, and the creative benefits of self-imposed exile’, *Guardian*, 5 February 2017, Section-Books.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Michael Beschloss, US Presidential Historian, (tweet) twitter.com/beschlossdc/status/896453073656315904?lang=en

a book I have not read'.²³ For André Aciman, the Egyptian-American who writes about identity, the act of beginning a new piece of writing is,

as if you are after something that is most difficult to articulate...trawling around this centre that the writing process will unveil and unearth for you...circulating the cone downwards to 'home'.²⁴

National identity is multiple, made of many threads. Recovery of the richness of the past not only testifies to the vitality and ancestry of the many identities that make up the nation, but also leads to self-understanding. In writing, you invite the self to resolve the complexity. The blank page for Welsh writer Mererid Hopwood is a *gwahoddiad* (invitation), offering prompts such as 'What would you like to tell me?' and 'Can you express that a different way?' or 'Can you be clearer?' and, 'Ah, that's what you mean!'²⁵

It is my belief that the book of *Braids of Song* is part of an on-going creative conversation on the question that my father asked me during his final weeks, 'What are you?'

²³ Joslyn T Pine, *Wit and Wisdom of The American Presidents, A Book of Quotations* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2012), p. 26.

²⁴ André Aciman, *Writing, His Work and Inspirations*, online video interview, Stanford University YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgYdBg_sg1Q> [accessed 27.07.2018].

²⁵ Talk given by Professor Mererid Hopwood on Academic Writing Skills, Carmarthen 11 July 2018.

CHAPTER 3: Research and Sources

This study is rooted in research and sources. During the years of developing and drafting the creative project, I conducted several personal interviews including one with the great-niece of Daniel Protheroe. Extensive formal research was undertaken in major archival repositories in the United States of America and Wales. Among others were the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, as well as major regional collections such as the Glamorgan Archives. All this material informed, inspired and sparked my imagination.

On reflection, many of my inquiries stemmed from information discovered and gathered from one main source: an invisible ghost-like figure whose presence was never far from my mind. Never previously examined in a scholarly fashion, the collection of Dr D E Jones (1867-1948) of Scranton, Pennsylvania demands special mention. Dr Jones was a journalist, educator, musician, community leader and chronicler of Welsh-America.

A dusty loft at the Lackawanna Historical Society was where I found Dr Jones' personal papers. There I searched for information to confirm Dr Joseph Parry's performance of *Arianwen* during his tour to America in 1899. What I discovered over the course of some eight to ten visits would change the trajectory and scope of my project. The collection numbered well over 20,000 items in scrapbook binders, photographs, personal correspondence and book manuscripts. At times, I was overwhelmed with the bulk of new information and the weight of responsibility in how to tell the story. Through his musical lens he shone a spotlight on the world between 1892 and 1948, highlighting developments in culture, politics, national identity, international relations, institutions, artists, Wales and more.

Not simply a collection, this amazing find included first hand writing about the other artists I was researching. Dr Jones had known many of these personally, such as Dr Joseph Parry, Dr Daniel Protheroe and, while not acquainted with Marie Novello, she is listed in his index. Coincidentally, he was a friend to her adoptive mother and mentor, Clara Novello Davies.

Early on, I was struck by the clippings of a series of articles from the New York Times Magazine entitled *Folksongs of America* (1927). In each instalment the feature focused on different types of songs. They ranged from pioneer tunes to jail ballads and spirituals, from shanty-boy lays to outlaw ballads, from banjo tunes and

work chanteys to Appalachia fiddle turns and old poetic ballads. Through Dr Jones' selections, I could see the whole world, not just Wales and America, but the febrile events in music after World War I which were all coming to New York. The clippings themselves were an interwoven community of artists, writers and musicians. The value he attached to cosmopolitan music can be seen in the photos and articles that he kept. Among these were: insights into post World War I through Paderewski; the build-up of fascism with the Nazi destruction of markers to Jewish musicians such as Mendelssohn; and a story from the Russian Revolution.²⁶ Explored in the article 'Bolsheviks storming the Winter Palace, Petrograd: an eleven-year-old prodigy met a prodigious event' are the details of the scramble by conductors to debut Shostakovich in New York.²⁷ In the same box was a pamphlet dating from 1926 about the correct etiquette of the American flag and the national anthem.

Once the epicentre of Welsh life, Pennsylvania was, according to Dr Jones, the state where the music of America began.

Philadelphia is the pioneer city of American Music. Here the first American opera was produced. Here concerts were given, and singing was taught for the first time. We can readily conclude that Philadelphia is the birthplace of American music.²⁸

Dr Jones believed the Welsh contributed a great deal to American music through choral and communal music-making activities. Indeed, letters in the collection show that the president of the Library of Wales, Aberystwyth once wrote to request that Dr Jones donate his works to the people of his birth country. Dr Jones declined and bequeathed it to the city of Scranton, his home.

Time and again I returned to my research notes and database of Dr Jones' materials for a spark of inspiration, much as a *flâneuse* strolling the boulevards of its shelves and boxes. They never let me down. Converting the research and inspiration into creative imaginings was the next step, as my wanderings with the people and their lives turned into life writing.

²⁶ 'Statue of Mendelssohn is ordered destroyed by Nazis' (Scranton PA: Papers of D E Jones, Lackawanna Historical Society, 1936).

²⁷ 'Bolsheviks storming the Winter Palace, Petrograd: An eleven-year-old prodigy met a prodigious event', TIME, July 20, 1942.

²⁸ D E Jones, 'Pennsylvania's Contribution to Music' (Scranton PA: Papers of D E Jones, Lackawanna Historical Society).

CHAPTER 4: Practice

In choosing to respond to these ideas in creative writing, I was drawn to the form of the monologue as it would allow me to delve into each of my chosen voices. Each of the three instances deal with death, the universal experience that alters life, especially for an immigrant.

The monologue style that I drew on began with the humorous but acerbic pieces of the Anglo-American, Joyce Grenfell (1910-1979). Reading around them I came across her American precursor, Ruth Draper (1884-1956), whose monologues presented an age in narratives. Despite their comic elements, there is huge pathos. ‘That’s not acting, that’s life!’²⁹ George Orwell’s testimony rings true when asked to comment on the edgy monologues of the writer and performer, Ruth Draper. The American monologue for Draper is one based on the cultural melting pot where her interest is in differentiated voices of immigrants. And so, the genre of the dramatic monologue appealed to me as a vehicle to show parts of a life and time, to both imagine and explore the immediacy of one person’s viewpoint.

In my three dramatic monologues I have sought to reveal and respond to the themes of the questions posed: immigration/migration, identity and creativity. Each protagonist has a story line that is, to varying degrees, fictionalized with an ‘illuminating incident’. In each monologue, there is what Edith Wharton calls a ‘tuning fork of truth’ that exposes the personae in life.³⁰

In the staging of her ‘Community of Characters’, Ruth Draper reveals a model for a monologue that builds in conversation. She demonstrates a very effective technique that focuses on the details of the immigrant experience, such as linguistic misunderstandings and exchange of voices from different worlds. The cultural background becomes immediately apparent to the reader in the altering of an accent and the use of vernacular words. To illustrate this technique, I have opted to quote a long passage from Draper’s, ‘The Scottish Immigrant at Ellis Island’.

²⁹ <<https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jesse-kornbluth/ruth-draper-invented-the-b-622242.html?guccounter=1>> [accessed 18.07.2018].

³⁰ Edith Wharton, *The Writing of Fiction* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1925), p. 99.

I'm twenty-one years old. ... I have come out to marry...
Well, d'ye see he left home three years ago, and when he had
enough, he was to send for me. So now I have come... Aye,
he knows I'm coming ... He'll be here the day to meet me.
I'm sure he will. ... I beg your pardon? . . . Polygamist am
I a polygamist? Whatever is that? . . . Am I married? . . . Oh,
no, Sir I'm not married... Anarchist? Is that a religion? . . .
I am a Presbyterian. ... In prison? Have I been to prison? . .
No, Sir we have no prison in Crianlarich... Asylum? De ye
mean where the puir daft people go? . . . No, Sir we have no
asylum in Crianlarich... Contagious diseases? . . . Well, I
had a cold on the steamer coming over, but it's gone now would
that be a contagious disease? . . . No, Sir I've never been ill;
only in the wintertime, sometimes I have a wee cold! . . . Come
out under contract? ... No contract only to Mr. MacAllister!³¹

Small details are often the key to an emotional connection for the auditor/reader. In performance, Draper simply used a change of scarf to identify and portray her character: a Scottish paisley for 'The Scottish Immigrant at Ellis Island' and multiple woollen shawls and a handkerchief for 'The German Governess'. For as Draper herself said about her audiences,

The people who come have to use their own imaginations to get the effect, and they appreciate that there is no scenery, no person except myself on the stage. The others are the joint product of my own and the audience's imagination.³²

And singer-songwriter Tom Waits clearly learned much about details and the dramatization of marginal voices from Draper, when he expressed his appreciation of her with, 'Ruth Draper makes movies for the ears.'³³

Closer to home, the voice in different languages rather than versions of the same is an effect seen in Ifor ap Glyn's deeply moving monologue, *Mamgu's Letter* (grandmother's letter). Written in remembrance of the fiftieth anniversary of the tragedy of Aberfan, ap Glyn skilfully and effectively blends both Welsh and English to exhibit the intergenerational linguistic differences between grandmother and grand-daughter. The use of the 'Valleys' turn-of-phrase heightens the

³¹ Morton Dauwen Zabel, *A Scottish Immigrant at Ellis Island from The Art of Ruth Draper, Her Dramas and Characters* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1960), p. 137.

³² Susan Mulcahy, <<https://www.ruthdraper.com/about-ruth-draper/draper-on-draper/>> [accessed 30.11.2018]

³³ Tom Waits, <<https://www.ruthdraper.com/drapers-legacy/performers-on-draper/>> [accessed 30.11.2018]

particularity of place: ‘A tipslide of sympathy...beth alla’i weud tho ti’ bach?... a fydd dim ysgol am wsnoth wetyn.’³⁴

In a similar manner to that of Ifor ap Glyn and Ruth Draper I sought to create scripts as for radio in my monologues. The sounds of the voices using a blend of Welsh and English along with the use of cadence and inflection reveal the character in a situation. The following example comes from *Arianwen in America* with Joseph Parry speaking to his deceased father.

Syrthio i’r tân that’s how I’m feeling, like I’m falling into the fire.
It’s hard to explain, but there’s such a weight to being famous.
What’s in a name, eh? *Y Doctor Mawr!*...they expect so much of me...I expect even more of myself...but recently I’ve been feeling as if the earth is going to swallow me up....the smoke’s coming and having run from it... I’m about to fall into the fire...and it’s burning anthracite coal...*glo carreg – a glo caled.*³⁵

It is, of course, impossible to write dramatic monologues without drawing on the work of Alan Bennett. I was influenced by his use of the literary pause – the silence of the word not said. The power this device gave Thora Hird in her performance of his ‘Waiting for the Telegram’ was deeply moving. Like Bennett, I sought to make the pauses convey as much as the utterances themselves. The *fermatas* serving as a vibrating underlay to the narrative. This can be seen in my work, *Étude de Concert: Cân fy nwylo* as Marie Novello reveals,

There’s a very private part of me in this piece of music – it’s all that I’ve managed to keep to myself ...to remember...a love, a partner...that I could not have by my side or in my bed...³⁶

According to the Marxist historian Gwyn Alf Williams, historians should examine myths as the ‘warp and woof of history’. He argued that their currency demonstrated how closely they ‘look back through the filters of other men’s minds’.³⁷ For me, the way of examining the myth was through the filter of the dramatic monologue, for example with Daniel Protheroe,

³⁴ Ifor ap Glyn, *Mamgu’s Letter*, <http://www.literaturewales.org/our-projects/national-poet-wales/cerddi-comisiwn-ifor-ap-glyn/llythyr-mamgu/> [accessed 17.07.2018]

³⁵ Mari Morgan, *Braids of Song*, p. 38.

³⁶ *Ibid* p. 150.

³⁷ Gwyn Alf Williams, *Madoc: The Indian tale still tantalizing the Welsh* (article) *Living Now, Legends*, March 14, 1980 www.gwynalfwilliams.co.uk [accessed 13.04.16).

Daralaw wanted to be sure that my tremendous contribution to Welsh music and the Welsh-American community was properly recognized by the University of Wales... by their awarding me an Honorary Doctorate. Can't put a price on that kind of support though, can you? Immigrant for immigrant...recognising another's efforts. How could the University refuse me? That's what they all said...hasn't come through yet...the doctorate ...maybe this summer in Wales...well, we'll see...they're a jealous bunch though...those musicians back home...
Gan dy well cei dy barchu, gan dy waeth cei dy farnu. Ha! What a saying, how would that be in English – as the old verse says – by your peers will you be respected, by your inferiors you'll be judged. Hm...scans better in Welsh, more lyrical.³⁸

Having read the work of scholars, researched undocumented materials, fingered the manuscripts and walked the pathways of the subjects, I was ready to turn to the craft of creating new texts. If, as St Augustine asserted, the dead are not absent but invisible, the monologues give voice to three personalities in order to share their thoughts with the reader. Influenced by the words of Swiss physician, Paul Tournier, I sought to blend my voice with my characters, like a gift to a friend:

The highest sign of friendship is that of giving another the privilege of sharing your inner thought. It is a personal gift in which there is self-commitment.³⁹

³⁸ Mari Morgan, *Braids of Song*, p. 85.

³⁹ Paul Tournier, *The Meaning of Gifts* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012), pp. 39-40.

REFLECTIONS ON THE INDIVIDUAL CREATIVE PIECES

ARIANWEN IN AMERICA:

Monologue in three acts (and postlude), Fall 1899

Background

In order to examine Joseph Parry in an American context, it was important to understand some of the struggles he experienced. Benedict Anderson's concept of nation is as an imagined community, a place where people perceive themselves to be part of a coherent group, an identity fuelled by vernacular publishing. Yet the entry into the imagined space for immigrants is problematised by the languages and inherited narratives which accompany them.

Through that language, [mother-tongue] encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed.⁴⁰

The declaration of American citizenship that Joseph Parry's father, Daniel, signed with his 'X' in 1858 illuminates the difficulties faced by a country seeking to forge a single national identity out of a mass of immigrants from very different backgrounds. It said:

Daniel Parry being duly sworn according to law before me...Prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas of the county of Montour, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, doth declare, that he was *born in Pembroke Shire, South Wales* in the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, whence he emigrated in the year, A.D. 1853, August 1st and now residing in the Borough of Danville, County of Montour in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, aged fifty seven years, *or thereabouts*.

The declaration tried to solve this problem by attempting to wipe out any earlier affiliations.

And he further declares that it is bona fide his intention to become a citizen of the United States of America, and to *renounce forever*, all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty whatever, and

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, Second Edition, 2006), p. 154.

particularly to *Victoria, Queen of Great Britain* and Ireland whom he was before a *subject*.

October 6th *A.D.* 1858⁴¹

American citizenship was granted to Daniel, and his British allegiance relinquished. That he was illiterate had not been an obstacle, nor that his roots were Welsh. Daniel's right of citizenship passed to his son, and later, with the financial backing of thousands of Welsh-American ironworkers, Joseph Parry was able to travel to London to pursue his studies at the Royal Academy of Music (Appendix B). In 1874 he became the first Professor of Music at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth. The arrival in Wales was the cultural stimulus to his productivity. As Frank Bott points out,

It was during his seven years in Aberystwyth that his best-known music was written – the eponymous hymn tune, the part-song *Myfanwy*, and the opera *Blodwen*.⁴²

But there were also difficulties of being an immigrant returning to his native country. Bott goes on to note that there were a number of disagreements with the College authorities in Aberystwyth. Being an experienced migrant, Parry moved on to find another, if not better, place:

in 1881, he moved to Swansea to take up the post of organist in Ebenezer chapel and to establish his own music college. In 1888 he moved again, to Cardiff, to take up a post of lecturer at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, where he remained until his death in 1903.⁴³

The experience of mobility continued to stimulate and, Bott notes, 'some of his best, though not his best-known, music was written in his later years.'⁴⁴

Between 1874 and his death in 1903, Parry made around eleven roundtrips to the United States. His citizenship made travel and work much simpler, but the support he received from the Welsh 'both sides of the pond' allowed his musical

⁴¹ *Italics*: my/author emphasis

⁴² 'Publishing Joseph Parry's Music' Text of a talk given by Frank Bott to the Aberystwyth Bibliographical Group on October 15th, 2013 <<http://users.aber.ac.uk/mfb/Bibliographic%20Group%20talk.pdf>> [accessed 28.07.2018].

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

talents to shine and be shared. Bott points out that, ‘He remained as proud of his American citizenship as of his Welshness’. It is clear that the entwined relation of past and present cultural identities fuelled his creativity.

For the immigrant, assimilation does not mean giving up everything but contributing to the evolving whole. Cultural assimilation for the individual is both a choice and a natural process, illustrated by the opening lines of Parry’s song, ‘New Friends and Old Friends’,

Make new friends but keep the old;
Those are silver, these are gold.

He continues in the same vein,

New-made friendships, like new wine,
Age will mellow and refine.

In the margins though, in the silence of the song, comes the deeper insight that this braided ideal was not, in practice, without its difficulties. The title page of the song published by Snell of Wales reads, ‘Dedicated by the composer to Edgar L. Ridgway, Esq.’ (Appendix C). Through my research I learned that Mr. Ridgway was the president of the newly created Board of Commissioners of Emigration, regulating immigration into the United States at Ellis Island. This might have been Cambro-American Joseph Parry hedging his bets - ‘Make new friends but keep the old’ - working both sides. Alternatively, it could have been a ‘just in case’ gift, should his re-entry into the United States be questioned.

For ‘mid old friends tried and true
Once more we our youth renew.
But old friends, alas may die,
New friends must their place supply.

Today, it is known simply for the motto of the opening lines of the mission theme song of the American Girl Scout movement, ‘Make new friends but keep the old, those are silver, these are gold’, rather than the man who wrote it. Though generations have learned his words, he is now simply an anonymous figure. Although his words are reduced to soundbites, what he created is still celebrated as a successful summary of the mechanics of blended identity.

Parry's opera, *Arianwen* illuminates the complexity of the immigrant identity by weaving the narratives and melodies of his country of origin with those of his new country. Parry identified himself as a Welsh musician, although his chosen identity was built on a blend of present and inherited elements. As every immigrant needs to be, he was resourceful in his ability to survive, especially in a medium as soaked in the patterns of the past as music. In the words of Dr D E Jones,

... [it was] this streak of vanity or conceit which led him to think that he was better than his fellow musicians. It was perfectly true that he was, but the strongly emotional and sensitive Welsh people did not want that fact continually borne upon them...still he was a step ahead ...as a cultured musician and composer.⁴⁵

In *Arianwen in America* I improvised around some of the facts of Parry's life in order to ask questions and cause internal dialogue with a pivotal character. The form of the monologue reflects the original opera which was in three acts. It is set in Danville, Pennsylvania in September 1899.

Act 1: *Opening Night in Danville*

Act II: *The Mad Scene*

Act III: *Sire of Song, Still'd*

Hilary Mantel highlights the value of the 'stranger' or 'newcomer' i.e. the one who asks the questions over and over again. In *Arianwen in America* I introduce a journalist in the first and second act to fulfil this role, asking the kinds of questions that generate the creative opportunities noted by Mantel:

There's a lot of use in a stupid character, one who has to be told twice. There's more use in a stranger – some newcomer who can ask the questions the reader wants to ask. In every scene, the writer's opportunity comes at the point of change.⁴⁶

The middle act is spoken by Dr Parry's brother-in-law, Gomer Thomas. He provides an American view, particularly in terms of the Civil War. His is the significant provocative role, in the same way as the witch in the opera. Thomas is

⁴⁵ D E Jones, *Dr. Joseph Parry*, Talk given to the First Welsh Congregational Church, Scranton, PA, May 25, 1941 (Scranton PA: Papers of D E Jones, Lackawanna Historical Society).

⁴⁶ Hilary Mantel, *Can these bones live?* (BBC Reith Lectures) [accessed 04.07.2017]

the one who reflects on Parry of the first act and transitions to the more intimate third act. It is no surprise that *Arianwen* was Parry's favourite opera, one he took on tour across America. The sharp contrast of Acts One and Two with Act Three and the revelation of the protagonist's inner doubts and fears revive the pain of grief. The personal and public issues come to life in what Lee Gutkind describes as the 'universal chord' composed in the woven relations of death, grief and family relationships.⁴⁷

Within *Arianwen in America* each act is introduced and bridged to the next by a poem titled 'personal paragraph'. The concept of personal paragraph stems from research into the Danville newspapers of Parry's day and the method of titling and reporting short but specific news items relating to a person. In much the same way as the poems of *Braids of Song*, both found and original, are the bridge pieces joining one story to the next, likewise in *Arianwen in America* the poems in the personal paragraphs are the shards of the story to be developed and explored in each of the three acts.

At its close the postlude memorialises Parry at the time of his death in February 1903, first in imaginings of the obituary for the diaspora of the Welsh in America, then in translation as it was in Wales. Even in death, the loss is braided and blended. The song rings on even if the *requiem* rings in a different tone.

⁴⁷ Lee Gutkind, *You can't make this stuff up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. (Boston: DaCapo Press-Lifelong Books, 2012), p. 62.

A WELL-TAILORED AMERICAN

Monologue in song through-composed with a tapestry of notes of 1926

Dr Daniel Protheroe strikes me as a more measured person and composer than Joseph Parry. His melody keeps moving forward, there is no looking back through a repeating refrain. The landscape of a sensory memory appears in the language of his letters home. Noting that ‘Letters have the power to grant us a larger life,’ Simon Garfield explains their value in expressing inner selves:

They reveal motivation and deepen understanding. They are evidential. They change lives, and they rewire history. The world once used to run upon their transmission – the lubricant of human interaction and the freefall of ideas, the silent conduit of the worthy and the incidental, the time we were coming for dinner, the account of our marvellous day, the weightiest joys and sorrows of love. ...A world without letters would surely be a world without oxygen.⁴⁸

It is from the ‘oxygen’ of Dr Protheroe’s letters, both real and imagined, that I seek to infuse life into my monologue, ‘A Well-Tailored American’. The overall form of the monologue is in three scenes linked together with ‘snapshots’ in letters of poetry. I chose to set each scene on a Sunday evening, selected as a time for reflection following the church service. The scenes take place around the time of three holidays: March 1st (St. David’s Day, Wales), July 4th (American Independence Day), and Christmas (both a sacred and a created holiday). Each part of the monologue anticipates a holiday with Dr Dan who is preoccupied with an activity that leads to reflection. These are:

Scene 1: Measuring for a new suit

Scene 2: Demonstrating how to conduct a choir

Scene 3: Decorating a Christmas carol

The year 1926 was selected as it was when his wife Hannah passed away. The exact date is moved from October to February to provide the framing for the monologue, in a year that was filled with professional accomplishments and recognition.

⁴⁸ Simon Garfield: *To the Letter: A Celebration of the Lost Art of Letter Writing* (New York: Gotham Books 2013) p. 19.

In the imaginings of the monologue, Dr Protheroe explores some of the emotional issues and expressions that struck me following a conversation with his great-niece Mrs. Hanna Protheroe Griffiths in Ystradgynlais.⁴⁹ The Welsh expressions *Gorau Cymro*, *Cymro oddi cartref* and *Does dim anrhydedd i broffwyd yn ei wlad ei hun* (the best Welshman is the one away from home / there is no honour for a prophet in his own country) mark his position as a Welshman looking back. The title, *A Well-Tailored American*, nods to the young Dan Protheroe's apprenticeship as a tailor in Wales learning to craft pieces together - both fabric and music. Later, America enabled him to become a full-time musician who would appreciate the cut of fine clothing. (Appendix D)

In my research, I came across documents that detailed a systematic campaign by the leaders of the Welsh-American community to petition the University of Wales. The objective was to secure an honorary doctorate for Daniel Protheroe in recognition of his contribution to Welsh music. One of the signatories, Charles Evans Hughes, was to become the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. I wondered why such extreme and extensive measures were necessary. The answer came in the petty jealousies and small mindedness of his colleagues in Wales. This, rather than the details of the petition, is what I chose to focus on in the epistolary monologue I gave to Dan Protheroe. In this I was again following Hilary Mantel's advice that 'you should resist the temptation to tidy up [the messiness of] the past'.

50

Over the last few years, I have looked to the life and work of Daniel Protheroe for insight on how to seek 'home' and maintain a sense of Welsh identity while also assimilating into the culture and ways of a chosen nation. Which flag should one place outside the home, and which one holds the place of prominence? The protocol for the American flag requires that it must always be higher than any others. Should they be as twin towers, side by side, as equals? Does one inevitably overshadow the other?

Adrienne Rich, an American poet with mixed Jewish and Welsh ancestry, points to the struggle over identity throughout her 1991 collection, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*. One section specifically addresses the question of the nature of patriotism:

Flags are blossoming now where little else is blossoming

⁴⁹ Mrs Hanna Protheroe Griffiths, Personal Interview at her home, March 2016 (Ystradgynlais, Wales).

⁵⁰ Hilary Mantel, *Can These Bones Live?* (BBC Reith Lectures), [accessed 04.07.2017].

And I am bent on fathoming what it means to love my country.
The history of this earth and the bones within it?
Minerals, traces, rumors I am made from, morsel, minuscule, fibre
One woman
Like and unlike so many, fooled as to her destiny, the scope of her task?
One citizen like and unlike so many, touched and untouched in passing...
A patriot is not a weapon.
A patriot is one who wrestles for the soul of her country as she wrestles for
her own being ...⁵¹

These are not new thoughts. In the backdrop of the Protheroe monologue are images of Klansmen marching in formation through the streets of the capital of a country that prides itself as the 'Mother of Exiles'.⁵² Chicago, at the meeting point of east and west, is a mix of Al Capone's violent world with the cultural institutions of the magnificent Art Deco infused city. The injustices of segregation and the blossoming of both jazz and American choral music occurred simultaneously in Protheroe's America. In Wales meanwhile, the National Eisteddfod welcomed Dr Protheroe at a time when miners out on strike were starved back to work.

Life is complicated, not just in the present, but in the ever-recurring messiness of human movement and the forging of shifting identities. But to return to Hilary Mantel's musings on writing the past, I see my job as a writer is,

not to be an inferior sort of historian, but to recreate the texture of lived experience: to activate the senses, and to deepen the reader's engagement through feeling... to put the reader in the moment, even if the moment is five hundred years ago.⁵³

And, like her, I believe it can only be done 'through honest negotiation with the facts and the power of the informed imagination.'⁵⁴

⁵¹ Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), p. 25.

⁵² Lazarus, Emma, *The New Colossus*.

⁵³ Mantel, Hilary, *Can these bones live?* (BBC Reith Lectures) [accessed 04.07.2017].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

ÉTUDE DE CONCERT: Cân fy nwylo

La chanson de mes mains ~ Song of my hands

A story is not like a road to follow... it's more like a house... go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows... You can go back again and again, and the house, the story, always contains more than you saw the last time. It has also a sturdy sense of itself, of being built out of its own necessity, not just to shelter or beguile you. To deliver a story like that, durable and freestanding, is what I'm always hoping. ⁵⁵

In the words of Alice Munro on writing, seeking is to deliver a 'durable and freestanding' story. *Étude de Concert: Cân fy nwylo* is a monologue in that vein illustrating a brilliant, if short, private life on the public stage: that of Marie Novello, an international pianist whose Welsh identity was braided with cosmopolitan sophistication and international music-making.

This monologue begins at the end, the imagined end of Novello's life. The writing flowed after extensive research that began with a sense of knowing – the *gwybod* (knowing) and the *adnabod* (recognising).

The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. has a striking photograph of Marie Novello which captured my attention and imagination.⁵⁶ The photograph intrigued me not only for its content and location, but also for a personal family resemblance.

Cofia nawr, ni'n perthyn! (remember we're related), the words of my late grandmother, and the striking likeness to her in the photograph captivated me and explained the persistent sense of knowing during my extensive research on her life. I had been told that she was in service (*gwasanaethu*) and that was all I knew of the woman with whom I shared a name. The photograph made me want to understand why someone 'in service' should be photographed on board a Transatlantic ocean liner, dressed in fur coat and hat. And why her digitized image taken from the glass negative original was in the prestigious 'Bain News Service' at the American Library of Congress.

⁵⁵ Alice Munro, *A Wilderness Station: Selected Stories*, 1968-1994 (Vintage International), introduction.

⁵⁶ <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2014713744/> [12.01.2019]

I was concerned that my creative collection had focused primarily on the complex identities of those who were able to progress through poverty to achievement as composers and musicians within a male orientated world. Missing was the more restricted experience of women who risked their reputations by stepping out of line to seek opportunities for self-development. Men could fight for education and self-determination, moving freely from one place to another, gaining respect as originators, but women had to use different skills if they wanted to achieve success. They could never escape their bodies, in that they were expected to be beautiful and glamorous and could move only within chaperoned boundaries. The sophisticated photograph gave a context that I imagined might lead to a figure, a time and a location that would allow me to identify with a female personality, one who seemed after her lifetime to have been silenced from history.

The records of Dr Jones of Scranton simply said,

WILLIAMS, MARIE NOVELLO: Cardiff pianist; born 1885 at Maesteg, daughter of William Williams, Gwilym Tâf; studied piano with Clara Novello Davies at 6; lived in Germany for some time and was heard by Leschetizky [...] returned to London and gave several successful international concerts...toured with Clara Novello Davies ladies choir...⁵⁷

My research shows that these bare facts were only a small part of her international story. Conventional histories had little understanding of a female musician who challenged the norms, an artist who lived and worked ahead of her time and created her own identity.

The ways creative work gets done are always unpredictable, demanding room to roam, refusing schedules and systems. They cannot be reduced to replicable formulas.⁵⁸

The comments of Rebecca Solnit on Virginia Woolf draw attention to the necessity of escaping systems for all woman artists. And yet, as Virginia Woolf herself recognises in her 'Professions for Women', it was not possible for women to completely free themselves from those roles. Woolf argues that it is essential for a woman artist to 'Kill the Angel' but also to be aware of her continuing influence.

⁵⁷ D E Jones, 'Index of Welsh Musicians' (Scranton: Papers of D E Jones, Lackawanna Historical Society).

⁵⁸ Rebecca Solnit, 'Woolf's Darkness: Embracing the Inexplicable', *New Yorker Magazine* (April 24, 2014).

The Angel was dead; what then remained? You may say that what remained was a simple and common object – a young woman in a bedroom with an inkpot. In other words, now that she had rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself. Ah, but what is ‘herself’? I mean, what is a woman?⁵⁹

Woolf’s awareness of the pressures on a woman’s identity are at the heart of her discussion of the symbolic angel of the house: she is clear that there is no such thing as a woman answering her own question: ‘I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know’.⁶⁰ Writing a monologue for Novello had to bring in an awareness of these gender pressures on her constructed identity in a way that was quite different to those experienced by the male protagonists. She was a public performer and so, unlike Woolf, Novello required the careful construction of her public persona: a demand that ensured she be constantly aware of the way she would be perceived. If she were to lose her reputation, her career as an artist would have been over. The essential interpretation of the female performer is clear in a *Chicago Tribune* review:

She is Marie Novello whose mother is a personage in the music of England and whose brother, Ivor is in this country for reasons connected with the screen and the ambulating portraits appearing thereon. She is good looking enough to be in the movies herself, with preference for the color process that should depict her blonde hair and pink gown and the contrasting dark curtain before which she sat. As a pianist, she has a personal style and a warmly appreciative attitude for the none too uncommon works of her programme.⁶¹

My initial thought was for a one-act play as part of a trilogy, but the drafting led me to hone the piece into a dramatic monologue with Marie Novello speaking for herself. The Penguin Random House book series, *The Last Interview and Other Conversations* inspired my reflection on several questions. I adopted the style of ‘wondering’: How would the distorted voice of Novello speak towards the end of her life? What would her viewpoint be of past and current events? What would be her attitude to life and work and the opportunities that had presented themselves to

⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf, ‘Professions for Women’, *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (eBook), <<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91d/index.html>> [accessed 03.12.2018].

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 22, 1923.

her because of her talent? And finally, I wondered about the challenge to her vulnerability and sense of privacy during her transition from this world.

Given the interview pretext of the monologue, several dilemmas presented themselves: to whom Ms Novello would speak, and whose questions would she be answering. Initially, I had specific family members in mind, from the minister at her bedside to her mother as her caregiver or indeed my grandmother as her cousin and proud supporter. Finally, in order to reveal more clearly those pressures Novello might have hidden from both family members and minister, I opted for the professional outsider, the ghost writer compiling the information that would serve as the basis for *The Last Interview*.

The response I received to my paper on Marie Novello at the *First International Conference on Women Working in Music* (Bangor University 2017) was pivotal in focusing my imagination on how to present her within a creative framework. My presentation had illustrated her life as an international pianist with photographs and extracts from archival recordings. The international audience of scholars, professional performers and composers were transfixed by the quality of these extracts. A comment by a piano professor from Rome was particularly significant. She spoke on the challenge to sustain an equal blend and balance of the rippling melodies between the two hands. This called for strength and stamina, as well as tremendous sensitivity. Novello, she maintained, was a consummate professional who interpreted complex music with grace and elegance. The name of the composition was *Étude de concert* by the Russian composer, Anton Arensky. *Étude de concert* provided me with the title and focus of my monologue, since it is defined in music as a short piece of technical difficulty and challenge.

Étude (Fr., 'ā-ˈtüd')

A study; especially, one affording practice in some particular technical difficulty...Étude de concert, one designed for artistic value in public performance.

In a creative work concerned with language and identity, the querying of Novello's escape from her upbringing seemed logical. It was easy to understand why she put her life in her hands. Music as a language is spoken through the body, and she portrayed the female body not only by adorning herself in beautiful dresses but also by going beyond physical appearance into a chosen profession with international adulation.

In two obituary writings from the time of her death in 1928 came the other revelations. She had woven her own identity in music and had ‘spoken’ in the language that touched audiences everywhere. And yet, the tribute given by the bard Wil Ifan, (Archdruid of the *Gorsedd* of Bards) on the day of her burial left no question that she was Welsh. It had been a life at the intersection of worlds and values, and though her career had taken her away from her home town, Marie Novello was revered and honoured there. The response to her death gave me the close for my creative narrative.

Yesterday a packed concert hall, warmth, enthusiasm; today this bleak mountain side, merciless rain, and wind and clay. Stumbling among the graves we remembered how well she had played that night. There is such a thing as inspired precision. Nothing was difficult to her cunning fingers. We saw her in every mood. Now in a frenzy clutching wildly huge handfuls of chords, then in a moment of tenderness picking out lovingly each single note. Have no fear that she will bruise the fruit. Those black grapes hanging on the twisted, agonised branches of Chopin’s grief, you can trust her to gather them. See, the kiss of her finger has not disturbed even the purple mist bloom. [...] In imagination I roamed the world with her as I stumbled among the graves. Thronged galleries of beauty and refinement; warmth, enthusiasm. A bleak mountain side, coal tips, derelict ironworks. And yet this was the greatest welcome of all. In the rain and the wind, the old parish stood bareheaded and strong men were not ashamed of their tears. She was back among her own people.⁶²

⁶² Wil Ifan, ‘In Memory of Famous Pianist’, *Glamorgan Gazette*, June 1928.

AFTERWORD: Reflecting on Self-reflections

Strategies for Creative Non-fiction

The *ysgrifau* (compositions/essays) of *Braids of Song* are the observations of a writer who travels, rather than a traveller who writes. The concept of ‘braids’ in the title is based on an exhilarating experience while travelling on fast moving fresh-water braided rivers in the wilderness areas of New Zealand. The shallow fast moving shifting channels of water between very high mountains became for me as song waters flowing between identities and cultures.

In travelling to another country based on immigration and cross-cultural experience, my visit to New Zealand was as the first international guest conductor of the New Zealand Welsh Association. My role was to conduct the biannual *cymanfa ganu* at the National Cathedral in Wellington. The magnificent sanctuary hosted over one thousand voices of Welsh heritage, *expats*, and others wishing to sing together. All desired to share in the singing of the hymns in Welsh. And yet, they were without the strength and experience to do it alone. Realizing this, I used my voice and a microphone to draw together and strengthen the new threads. The Association’s president later wrote:

Mari’s clear leadership and vast experience gave a fine-tuned balance to the programme... she managed with ease the logistics of the large crowd in a large cathedral. An enlightening factor was Mari’s skillful ability to sing along with the crowd ...we all heard her voice and with confidence raised, we were carried along during the Welsh verses. She kept the pace, tempo, rhythm, and the repeated refrains going with gusto when everyone kept their eyes on Mari and her baton! ⁶³

The focus in this commentary has been the elements within *Braids of Song* that call for explanation. The creative non-fiction essays on the other hand are intended to be self-evident. They are themselves commentaries, for as Gutkind writes,

The word ‘creative’ non-fiction has to do with how the writer conceives ideas, summarizes situation, defines personalities, describes places – and

⁶³ Margot Griffith, ‘National Welsh Cymanfa Ganu of New Zealand: Mari Morgan Charms Welsh New Zealand’, *Ninnau* (December 2016).

shapes and presents information. ... Creative non-fiction differs from fiction because it is necessarily and scrupulously accurate...balance is unnecessary, and subjectivity is not only permitted but encouraged.⁶⁴

He perceives the relationship between the writer and the subject as that of a pendulum in motion. At one extreme, the swing goes toward the public or issue orientated or 'big idea' elements of creative nonfiction. In the other direction is the 'personal or private' creative nonfiction. It is the writer's choice as to where the writing pendulum hovers. My objective has been to create the musical sweet spot in the middle - the 'rich and compelling prose mixture'. For there, as Gutkind says, it is in the synthesized sound that 'the jazz of creative nonfiction' becomes 'a literary symphony'.

Culture and Identity

A premise in Alan Lomax's study, *Catometrics*, is the belief that 'the dominant values of societies fundamentally influence how their members sing.'⁶⁵ My interpretation of these values are as dominant melodies that sometimes rub up against each other. Irving Berlin, a Jewish Russian-American immigrant composer, released his iconic 'God Bless America' as a peace song. Interestingly, it became hugely popular in the patriotic approach to America's entry into the arena of World War II. Kate Smith's rendition rubbed Woody Guthrie the wrong way, and the 'typical Welshman, quarrelsome given to beautiful words' reacted to the trend and wrote the other iconic American song, *This Land is Your Land*.⁶⁶ In the 1960s, as part of the Welsh language and independence movement, the activist, Dafydd Iwan penned *Mae'n wlad i mi* to Guthrie's tune, effectively launching the first Welsh protest song. That was the version I learned as a child.

Alan Lomax, the man who discovered Woody Guthrie, and who was his long-time friend in music 'believed that all cultures should be looked at on an even playing field':

Not that they're all alike. But they should be given the same dignity, or they had the same dignity and worth as any other.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Lee Gutkind, *You can't make this stuff up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. (Boston: DaCapo Press-Lifelong Books, 2012), p. 7, 55.

⁶⁵ Alan Lomax interview with C. Kuralt: <http://research.culturalequity.org/home-dil.jsp> [accessed 06.08.2018]

⁶⁶ Alan Lomax interview with C. Kuralt: 'Woody Guthrie...this little Welshman, he was from Wales' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r6FxxrWJjI> (Time code: 1:24) [accessed 08.05.2019]

⁶⁷ Anna Lomax Wood: <https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2012/03/28/148915022/alan-lomaxs-massive-archive-goes-online> [accessed 06.08.2018]

This observation is particularly pertinent, not only for a musician [Woody Guthrie] whose Welsh identity has been unrecognised in his association with American folk music, but also for myself and for all the musicians whose woven songs and identities are the subject of my creative thesis. And, in an ideal world, wouldn't this belief generate a kinder and wiser humanity?

Along the coast from where I was raised in southwest Wales is a town with centuries of history. The Norman castle, a fortress, stands guard at the *aber* (the mouth of the estuary), while on the opposite bank the spire of the ancient church proclaims its rituals on the skyline. Passing between them are the waters of two rivers: the *Gwendraeth*, *Fawr* and *Fach* (large and the small). They come together and share a *gwely* (bed), as the name of the town tells us, *Cydweli*.

Mi ganaf gân! (I'll sing a song!), goes the call of the camp song with the response, *Beth fedri ganu?* (What can /do you sing?), much as the immigrant entering an existing community, one sizes up the other. The question of whether or not they share a 'bed' is similar to the tension and release in song – the dissonance before harmony, or the polyphony of the lines uniting at the cadence. Raymond Williams discusses the role of artistic expression in the wake of immigration as 'community of the medium':

.... liberated or breaking from their national or provincial cultures, placed in quite new relations to those other native languages or native visual traditions, encountering meanwhile a novel and dynamic common environment from which many of the older forms were obviously distant, the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase [Modernism] found the only community available to them: a community of the medium; of their own practice.⁶⁸

And once gathered as a community, 'with their new second common language ... a medium that could be shaped and reshaped.'⁶⁹

This, to me, is a liberating experience and a 'breath of fresh air'. Through examining the lives of three musicians, I found the answer to the question that was posed to me by my father as he was dying: the way to answer is through writing, *byw y cwestiwn drwy ysgrifennu* (living the question through writing).

⁶⁸ Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism Against the New Conformists* 'Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism' (Brooklyn: Verso, 1989), pp. 45 – 46.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

In conclusion, this doctoral thesis, in both its creative and commentary sections, has explored the exuberance of two composers and the artistry of a pianist, illuminating the blending of identities, the braiding of cultures and the weaving of songs. There are no definitive answers to the questions posed, but the *cae gwirionedd* (place of truth) lies in the exploration. The journey continues, for as the poet Rilke said:

Try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language...Live the questions now...Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.⁷⁰

+ + +

⁷⁰ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet* #4 (1903).

CODA

There's a feeling in music and it carries you back down the road you have travelled and makes it again. Or it takes you back down the road somebody else has come and you look out across the world from the hill they are standing on. (Woody Guthrie)

What am I? This is a question I grappled with while getting beneath the skin of the characters that I chose to write through in *Braids of Song*. What were they, I posed? Were they Welsh or American? Did their answers influence how they lived their music? Would they have been able to answer these questions, if I were to interview them? Or would they be as reticent as I have been at times? Was Marie Novello a musician or an artist who performed great works through music? Would they be in accord with me in quoting Walt Whitman, 'We contain multitudes'?⁷¹

My father often spoke of 'the gift of the stranger', and for me, the nuance of my voice in a new land is both an exciting and unsettling experience whether it be in America or on returning home to the Wales of now. In writing, I have tried to maintain the soft eyes of the calm observer in order to see the wider perimeter.

The coda is a space to take in all that has been developed and explored in the main body, a closure that brings a sense of balance or perspective. Its navigation symbol - resembling cross-hairs in a circle placed after a final verse or repeated section of a folk song - signalling the jump to the new segment that will draw the performance to its close. The sense of gaining an equilibrium after being thrown off balance by the loss of my father came in the writing of *Braids of Song* in both its creative and commentary forms, a coda for this period of my life.

The navigation point of my journey has undoubtedly been *Arianwen*. In taking on my father's baton and my passion for music in words, I am struck and sustained by the writing of Woody Guthrie when he says that 'there's no real trick of creating words to set to music, once you realize that the word is the music and the people are the song'.⁷² Thanks to my father's bequest of *Arianwen* which led to the

⁷¹ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass-Song of Myself* from *Whitman Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1982), p. 246.

⁷² Woody Guthrie, Diary entry 16.03.1942

https://www.woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/Theres_A_Feeling_In_Music.htm [30.11.2018]

experience of writing *Braids of Song*, my own song is again restored as I sing a joyous and lyrical melody in the key of life.

LEGACY

Braids of Song has already succeeded in re-igniting an interest in Daniel Protheroe. *Tŷ Cerdd*, the organisation charged with ‘promoting and celebrating the music of Wales’, has for the first time recognised the Welsh-American composer in its on-line database of Welsh composers, encompassing his achievements both sides of the Atlantic as well as publishing many of his unknown works.⁷³ My research on Marie Novello, illuminating her life as a woman hidden from history, has led to interest in a programme featuring her recordings by BBC Radio 3. My own intention is to publish a monograph on her life in picture book format. Dr Jones bore witness and ‘composed’ through the keeping of records in a dynamic period. In so doing, he entrusted documents of his seminal work to the people of Scranton, Pennsylvania. In this way he succeeded in leaving a legacy of shared memory and music. It has been a privilege to be the first to discern and appraise the significance of his collection in scholarly fashion.

⁷³ <http://discoverwelshmusic.com/composers/daniel-protheroe/> [12.01.2019]

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APPENDIX A:

PICTURESQUE OPERA AT PONTYATES



(Photo by Sandhurst Studios.)

Noddfa Operatic Society (augmented) gave a performance of the opera, "Arianwen," by Dr. Joseph Parry, last Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, at the Welfare Hall. This was a new venture in the village, and there had been a great deal of work and preparation during the winter months. People came from afar for this musical feast, and all concerned are to be congratulated for making it such a success. The cast included Mary Evans Thomas, Betty Jones Davies, Edith Wynne Williams, Marlene Rowlands, Len Jones, Bryn Jones, Don Jones and Vivian Williams, together with villagers, robbers, witches and dancers. The musical director was the Rev. E. D. Morgan, the accompanist Mrs. W. Walters, and the dancing was in the charge of Mrs. C. D. Griffith. They were assisted by the Luther Lewis String Orchestra. The chairmen were Mr. A. J. Walters, Pontyberem; Mr. Iorwerth Howells, Director of Education, and Mr. John Williams, C.C. Llanelly. The performance of the opera was greatly appreciated by a full house each evening. A professional cast could not have given a much better performance than the above artists and choir, for it reached a very high standard. Congratulations are due to the Rev. E. D. Morgan upon such a splendid achievement.



Rev. E D Morgan and the *Noddfa* Operatic Society, Pontyates
performing *Arianwen* by Joseph Parry.
(March 1953)

APPENDIX B:



A rare clipping of the young Joseph Parry

(1841 – 1903)

(From the D E Jones Collection, Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton PA)

APPENDIX C:

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APPENDIX D:



Dr Daniel Protheroe

(1866 – 1934)

(From the D E Jones Collection, Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton PA)