

## THOMAS, DAVID JOHN (Afan; 1881 - 1928), musician

**Name:** David John Thomas  
**Pseudonym:** Afan  
**Date of birth:** 1881  
**Date of death:** 1928  
**Parent:** Evan Thomas  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** musician  
**Area of activity:** Music; Performing Arts  
**Author:** William Evans

Born 15 April 1881 at Cwmafán, Glamorganshire, son of Evan Thomas (choir conductor) and his wife (who was a singer and the daughter of David Nicholas, himself a knowledgeable musician). As a boy, he learned to play the piano and violin and, later, in a Bournemouth church and at Llandaff cathedral, was taught to play the organ. He studied under many music teachers and, among them, under [Dr. Joseph Parry](#) at the University College, Cardiff. He was for twenty-five years organist at Bethesda chapel, Briton Ferry. He conducted two male voice choirs : the Brython and the Afan Glee Society. In 1920 he joined the Welsh orchestra as a violinist and at the same time conducted a local orchestra. His compositions were successful at the national eisteddfod and were performed at the eisteddfod concerts at Swansea, 1926, and Aberafan, 1932. His most ambitious work was his composition for choir and orchestra to words by Sir Henry Newbolt, ' He fell among thieves '; this was performed at Aberafan. He also wrote a cantata, ' Merch y Llyn,' words by [Walcyn Wyn](#). Although he wrote a large number of excellent part-songs and instrumental pieces, his most popular works are his solos and hymn-tunes. He published the following solos: ' Smile a Little,' ' Drosom Ni,' ' Rock of Ages,' ' Land of the Silver Trumpets,' ' Eiluned,' ' Cymru Fach i Mi,' ' Suogan,' and ' Beth wna Ddyn '; over 100 were left in manuscript form. He also published two collections of hymn-tunes bearing the title *Eirin Afan*, i and ii; his tunes are also found in our hymn-books and there are sixty which have never been published. His chief characteristic and the one most evident in his compositions was his originality. He died 13 May 1928 and was buried in the parish churchyard, Cwmafán.

### Author

Reverend William Evans, (1883 - 1968)

### Sources

Wil Ifan, *Afan, a Welsh Music-Maker* (1944)

### Additional Links

NLW Archives: [D. 'Afan' Thomas \(Composer\) Music Manuscripts](#)

Wikidata: [Q28361489](#)

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