

BRYN-JONES, DELME (1934-2001), opera singer

Name: Delme Bryn-Jones
Date of birth: 1934
Date of death: 2001
Spouse: Carolyn Ruth B. Jones (née Savory)
Child: Emma Bryn-Jones
Child: Tom Bryn-Jones
Parent: Elizabeth Jones (née Austin)
Parent: William John Jones
Gender: Male
Occupation: opera singer
Area of activity: Music
Author: Trevor Herbert

He was born in Station Road, Brynamman, on 29 March 1934, the son of John Jones, a cobbler, and his wife Elizabeth (née Austin). His registered name was Delme Jones; the hyphenated 'Bryn' (derived from the opening syllable of his birthplace) was prefixed to his surname in later life. He was educated at Brynamman Primary School and at Ammanford Technical College. On leaving the College he worked as a colliery electrician. His abiding passion was singing, but he was also a talented rugby player and represented Wales at under-21 level.

He received encouragement in music from his paternal grandfather, who was a noted singer and oboist, and Delme's rich baritone voice became well-known even in his late-teenage years. After taking music lessons locally and making something of a reputation in eisteddfodau he took lessons in Aberystwyth with the celebrated voice trainer [Redvers Llewelyn](#). This prepared him for the Guildhall School of Music, London, which he entered in September 1959, studying for just one year before using a prize scholarship to continue his studies at the Vienna Academy of Music.

He made his professional operatic debut with the New Opera Company in Elizabeth Maconchy's *The Sofa*. His Covent Garden debut was in 1963, and in the same year he made his Glyndebourne debut as Nick in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. His US debut came in 1967 as Lescaut in *Manon* and Donner in *Das Rheingold* with the San Francisco Opera; these appearances may have been prompted by the influence of Geraint Evans, who performed there in seventeen successive seasons. By 1970 he was well established as an international opera soloist with performances at many European centres including the Vienna State Opera.

Delme Bryn-Jones was an especially important soloist in Welsh National Opera productions - particularly as *Macbeth* and *Rigoletto* - in the first half of the 1970s, when the company, recently established as a full-time organisation, was at one of the most significant stages of its development. He was often treated with an air of equivocation by London critics. They were not critical of his voice, which was always rich and full, especially in the lower range, but of his characterisations, which were sometimes thought to be unconvincing - a judgement that was lost on his audiences, with whom he was a great favourite.

He performed to great acclaim in many of the world's concert and opera houses, and though he was most comfortable in Italian romantic opera, he sang some of the more challenging roles in twentieth-century repertoire with consummate ease. He worked well in several television genres, with roles such as Bosun in the 1966 television production of Britten's *Billy Budd*, Blind Captain Cat in [Dylan Thomas's](#) *Under Milk Wood*, and in Elaine Morgan's famous 1978 television adaptation of [Jack Jones's](#) *Off to Philadelphia in the Morning*. His weekly S4C programme *Delme* was also popular.

Delme Bryn-Jones's career overlapped with that of Geraint Evans and was somewhat eclipsed by it. This in itself was never a cause of angst to Bryn-Jones, but he harboured a feeling that his modest background and reluctance to manufacture the type of polished persona that was fit for a great opera star had hampered his progress; certainly, the comment that he was less adept than others at running his career has substance. At his best he was charming and generous, but bouts of heavy drinking led to alcoholism, an affliction he eventually conquered. In his later years he devoted much of his time to helping others who were similarly challenged. In 1972 he was admitted to the Gorsedd at the National Eisteddfod in Haverfordwest, taking the name Delme Bryn.

In 1963 he married Carolyn (née Savory), with whom he had two children, Emma and Tom. Carolyn died in 1996. The family, which from necessity had been based in London, moved back to Wales in 1977 and settled at Y Bwthyn, Llanarth, Ceredigion. It was there that he died on 25 May 2001 of a pulmonary embolism. He was cremated and his ashes were scattered on the Black Mountain.

Author

Trevor Herbert

Sources

Official Birth, Death, Marriage and Census documents;

Obituaries and press reports;

Consultations with the subject's family;

Personal knowledge.


Photographs of Delme Bryn-Jones in various operatic roles are available at the archives of the Welsh National Opera.

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Delme Bryn-Jones](#) 

Additional Links

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Wikidata: [Q5254281](#) 

Published date: 2015-05-18

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