

HUGHES, ARWEL (1909-1988), musician

Name: Arwel Hughes
Date of birth: 1909
Date of death: 1988
Spouse: Enid P. Hughes (née Thomas)
Child: Delun Arwel Callow (née Hughes)
Child: Ieuan Arwel Hughes
Child: Owain Arwel Hughes
Parent: Catherine Hughes
Parent: William Hughes
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Music
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Arwel Hughes was born on 25 August 1909 at 'Arwelfa', Rhosllannerchrugog, one of nine children of William and Catherine Hughes. His older brother was the musician [John Hughes](#) (1896-1968). He was educated at Ruabon Grammar School and the Royal College of Music in London, where he studied composition with C. H. Kitson and Ralph Vaughan Williams. Following a period as organist at St Margaret's, Westminster and St Philip and St James, Oxford, he was appointed in 1935 to a post with the BBC in Wales, where he later became a producer in the Music Department under [Mansel Thomas](#). He followed [Thomas](#) as Head of the Department from 1965 to 1971. From 1950 onward he conducted the BBC Welsh Orchestra, and promoted the work of Welsh composers and artists through radio and television performances. He was Music Director of the Llangollen International Eisteddfod from 1978 to 1986. It was he who organised the music for the investiture ceremony of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon in 1969, and he was appointed OBE in the same year. In Cardiff he served for many years as organist and choirmaster of the Tabernacl Baptist chapel, where he conducted a number of choral works. He was also Chairman of the Music Committee for the National Eisteddfod at Cardiff in 1960 and 1978.

He rose to prominence as a composer at the National Eisteddfod at Machynlleth in 1937 when his *Fantasia for Strings on an Old Ecclesiastical Welsh Melody* was conducted by Adrian Boult. This work was dedicated to [J. Lloyd Williams](#) (1854-1945), who had given him the melody. It was published in 1949 as *Fantasia for Strings* and became a popular orchestral piece. He composed two notable choral works to libretti by his BBC colleague Aneurin Talfan Davies (1909-1980), namely *Dewi Sant* for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and *Pantycelyn*, which was performed at the National Eisteddfod in Swansea in 1964. He also composed two operas which were performed by the Welsh National Opera: *Menna* (1954), to a libretto by Llewelyn Wyn Griffith, which was performed at Sadler's Wells, and *Serch yw'r Doctor* (1960), to a libretto by [Saunders Lewis](#) based on Molière's play, *L'amour médecin*. Of his smaller scale works *Gweddi* (1944), for soprano, chorus and strings, became popular, as well as his setting of words by [T. Rowland Hughes](#), 'Tydi a rodhaist'. This setting was broadcast at the end of a feature programme about Wales in 1938, and was subsequently arranged by the composer for male voices.

He married in 1940 Enid P. Thomas, and they had two sons, Ieuan and Owain, and a daughter, Delun. Owain came to prominence as a professional conductor, and the composer's grandson, Meuryn Hughes, established the imprint Aureus to publish his grandfather's works.

He died in Cardiff on 23 September 1988 and his remains were cremated at Thornhill Crematorium. In a tribute Alun Guy said of him that he was 'one of the small company of composers who gave Welsh music self-respect.'

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

Welsh Music, 8/9 (1988/89)

Y Faner, 7 Hydref 1988

Further Reading

Mansel Thomas, [Cyfansoddwyr Ieuaic Cyfoes](#), *Tir newydd*, rhif 7, Chwefror 1937, pp.3-6

[ARWEL HUGHES](#), accessed May 2020

Oriana Publications: [Arwel Hughes \(1909 - 1988\)](#), accessed May 2020

Lyn Davies, 'Hughes, Arwel (1909-1988)', *Cydymaith i Gerddoriaeth Cymru* (Talybont 2018), pp.241-242

Wikipedia Article: [Arwel Hughes](#)

Additional Links

NLW Archives: [The T_Cerdd Archive: C7: Arwel Hughes](#)

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