

BRAZELL, DAVID (1875 - 1959), singer

Name: David Brazell
Date of birth: 1875
Date of death: 1959
Spouse: Catherine Brazell (née Hughes)
Parent: Mary Brazell
Parent: John Brazell
Gender: Male
Occupation: singer
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Music; Performing Arts
Author: Huw Williams

Born Cesail Graig, Pwll, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, 23 February 1875, son of John and Mary Brazell. He was reared in a musical family; his father (a collier) was fond of music, and two of his brothers, John and Thomas, were fairly well known musicians - John a tenor soloist, and Thomas a choir conductor and a precentor at the Independent chapel in Pwll. David and John went on a tour in the United States for seven months with the Llanelli choir in 1909-10; John died on the ship *Mauretania* whilst returning to Britain from New York.

After leaving the elementary school at Pwll, he worked in the tinsplate industry and studied music in Llanelli in his spare time, firstly with Maggie Aubrey and later with R.C. Jenkins, conductor of the Llanelli Choral Society who had been taught by [Joseph Parry](#). He served his apprenticeship as a singer in eisteddfodau and with the encouragement of R.C. Jenkins he went to the Royal Academy of Music in London in May 1901 where he studied for five years with Frederic King (singing), Frederic Corder (harmony and counterpoint), and Edgardo Levi (opera). He had a brilliant career as a student; he won six of the academy's medals, and he took a prominent part in performances of some of the principal operas there. When he finished his course in 1906 he was offered contracts with some of the main opera companies but although he joined the Carl Rosa Opera Company for a short period he chose to follow a career as a freelance professional singer.

He sang at concerts at most of the principal towns of Wales and England, as well as on the continent. He sang also in the national eisteddfod concerts and at the Harlech festival, and he became a favoured singer of some of the major composers of his time. At the request of Edward German he took the part of the Earl of Essex in his opera *Merrie England* in Bournemouth, and he was invited by Edward Elgar to sing at an early performance of his oratorio *The Dream of Gerontius*. Another composer who admired him was [D. Vaughan Thomas](#) who wrote and dedicated to him his well known song *Angladd y Marchog*, as well as his arrangement of *Y bwthyn bach to gwellt* ('[Crych Elen](#)', Thomas Lloyd).

He had a delightful and rich baritone voice which was always well disciplined. As the style and quality of his voice were ideal for recording purposes, his name was one of the first to appear in the catalogues of gramophone companies. He started to record on wax rolls before the turn of the twentieth century and he continued to record on 78 disks for about half a dozen recording companies up to the 1930s. These disks included popular songs, selections from operas and oratorios and Welsh songs.

He was on friendly terms with many prominent and influential musicians. He inspired Katie Moss (in 1910) to write 'The Floral Dance' based on a Cornish air, a song that became a great favourite of the singer Peter Dawson. He married in 1938 Catherine Hughes, headmistress of Coleshill school, Llanelli. He died in Bryntirion Hospital, Llanelli, 28 December 1959 and was cremated at Morriston.

Author

Huw Williams, (1922 - 2002)

Sources

Y Cerddor, May 1910, July 1910, and June 1911

Welsh Music, the journal of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music, 3, Winter 1970, 8, 25

Peter Dawson, *Fifty years of Song* (London 1951)

the dates of his birth and death provided by his niece, Mrs. Morfudd Beynon, Pembre

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [David Brazell](#)

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