

HUGHES, JOHN (1896 - 1968), musician

Name: John Hughes
Date of birth: 1896
Date of death: 1968
Parent: Catherine Hughes
Parent: William Hughes
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Eisteddfod; Music; Performing Arts
Author: Huw Williams

Born 16 November 1896, in 6 Broad Street, Rhosllannerchrugog, Denbighshire, one of the 9 children of William Hughes and Catherine, his wife. He was educated in Grango School, Rhosllannerchrugog and then spent 8 years at Hafod colliery, near his home. He was deeply attached to music at an early age; he conducted local choirs, and studied harmony and counterpoint with Dr. J.C. Bridge, organist at Chester cathedral. In 1921 he went to the University College, Aberystwyth, and after graduating in music in 1924 he stayed there an extra year to study Welsh literature under [Thomas Gwynn Jones](#). He was president of Y Gymdeithas Geltaidd (the Welsh society) at college. He became organist and choir-master at Noddfa Baptist church, Treorchy, 1925-42, before being appointed music organiser for Meirionnydd - the first appointment of its kind in Wales - and made his home in Dolgellau.

By the time he retired in 1961 he had attained prominence as a conductor, adjudicator and lecturer. He succeeded in forming choirs in every part of Meirionnydd, and arranged a number of successful music festivals in the county. He conducted 50 performances of 20 different choral works between 1942 and 1961, and as a result of this activity the Dee and Clwyd Music Festival was established at Corwen in 1955 - a festival which he served as choirmaster for the first 8 years. He was also active with the *eisteddfod*; he was responsible for the musical aspects of the national eisteddfod at Dolgellau (1949), and prepared the choirs for the *eisteddfodau* in Colwyn Bay (1947), Llanrwst (1951), Dyffryn Maelor (1961) and Llandudno (1963). He served also as an adjudicator, and during the last years of his life he edited the Welsh translations in the music section of the National Eisteddfod.

He was a zealous Baptist, being elected president of the Welsh Baptist Union, 1963-64. He took a particular interest in hymnology, and was considered to be an authority on the history of church music. He edited *Llawlyfr Moliant Newydd* (1955) and *Mawl yr Ifanc* (1968), and was a member of the editorial board of *The Baptist Hymn Book* (1962). He also edited the music in *Llyfr gweddi a mawl i ysgolion* (1958) for the education committees of Caernarfonshire, Merionethshire and Cardiganshire. Many of his original hymn-tunes, and his arrangements of hymn-tunes and carols, were included in his memorial programme, *Rhaglen goffa John Hughes, 1896-1968*, which gives a glimpse of the many aspects of his career as a musician, editor, researcher and scholar.

He was not a prolific composer, though he did write some hymn-tunes, such as ' Maelor ' and ' Arwelfa ', which became very popular. He revealed his real musical talent as a gifted choir-master and conductor. He died in a hospital in Cardiff, 14 November 1968, and was buried in Rhosllannerchrugog cemetery.

Author

Huw Williams, (1922 - 2002)

Sources

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Welsh Music, the journal of the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music, 3 (1969)

Y Cymro, 1 June 1961 and 21 November 1968

information from his brother, Arwel Hughes, Cardiff

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