

JONES, GLADYS MAY, 'MAI' (1899 - 1960), pianist, composer and producer of light programmes on radio

Name: Gladys May Jones
Date of birth: 1899
Date of death: 1960
Spouse: David Davies
Parent: Beatrice Jones (née Gibbon)
Parent: Thomas John Jones
Gender: Female
Occupation: pianist, composer and producer of light programmes on radio
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Music; Performing Arts
Author: Huw Williams

Born 16 February 1899 in Newport, Monmouth, the only child of Thomas John Jones, stationmaster of Newport and his wife Beatrice. When she was 8 yrs old [D. Vaughan Thomas](#) heard her playing the piano at an *eisteddfod* and he suggested to her mother that she had a brilliant future as a pianist provided she was sent to a competent teacher. At the age of 10 she was appointed organist of Mynydd Seion (Congl.) church, Hill Street, Newport, a post which she held for over 30 years.

She won the Caradoc Scholarship to study composition and piano playing at the University College, Cardiff, where her teacher [David Evans](#) (1874 - 1948) described her as one of the best organists he had ever heard. She also showed an unusual skill as a pianist during this period, and this was recognised later when she was chosen to be one of the official accompanists for the national eisteddfod at Pontypool in 1924.

She pursued a professional career as a piano soloist in a concert party, and she also came into prominence as a mimic as well as a singer and soloist on the accordion. She became a member of several notable groups in the entertainment world in London, including 'The five magnets', 'The Carroll sisters', and 'The three Janes'. She first broadcasted from Savoy Hill with Jack Payne's band in 1928, and for the first time from Cardiff in 1932. She also broadcast from Belfast, Birmingham and Bristol in the 1920s. She joined the B.B.C. staff at Cardiff in 1941, and her name became known through her work as producer of many popular radio programmes, including '*Welsh Rarebit*', '*Saturday Starlight*', '*Merry-go-round*' and '*Silver Chords*'. Much of the music included in these series were her own compositions and these broadcasts provided an opening for several artists who became prominent figures in English light entertainment. She wrote the music for the radio performance of *Twm Sion Cati*, the first Welsh pantomime ever broadcast on radio.

She was an inspired radio personality. She tried to base her work as producer on American patterns and standards, something new and unfamiliar in the early days of broadcasting. She had the advantage in her work of being able to compose quickly and sometimes impromptu. Her first song, 'Blackbirds', was published in 1925, and in 1927 her song 'Wondering if you remember' was included in the popular musical comedy *The gipsy princess*. She also wrote "Nos da/Good night" (1946), 'We'll keep a welcome' (1949), and 'Rhondda rhapsody' (the piano theme of the popular radio series '*Welsh Rarebit*', 1951).

She married at Newport in 1947, David (Davey) Davies of Garnant, a prominent singer and programme engineer for the B.B.C. in Wales (he died in 1964). She retired from the B.B.C. in 1959, and died at her home, 19 St. Mark's Crescent, Newport, 7 May 1960, and was buried in St. Gwynllyw churchyard.

Author

Huw Williams, (1922 - 2002)

Sources

Personal research

Empire News, 8 May 1960

Western Mail, 9 and 12 May 1960, 10 February 1983, 5 January 1988

additional information supplied by the B.B.C. and the Rev. Evan Davies, Crymych

[*The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*](#), 1991, 307-9

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Mai Jones](#)

Additional Links

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