CHAPTER 1

Music in Welsh History

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All histories of music need contexts, but some more than others. The relevant contexts, at least in western music, have been patronage (whether benevolent or commercial), cultural production and distribution, the audiences for which music has been written and performed, the needs and purposes it has served, and how continuities have been interrupted by musical or extra-musical interventions. It would not be an enormous step to think of Welsh music history in similar terms were it not for the sizeable adjustment needed because Welsh music has not consistently followed the path of the mainstream European tradition. There is no body of secular works in the art music category from before the mid-twentieth century that has gained sustained public interest or deserved serious analytical attention, so no claim can be made for Welsh music to have a composer-led history. It can therefore reasonably be asked why Wales should famously be regarded as a 'musical nation' and a 'land of song'. These could be dismissed as stock phrases of the type routinely tagged to national stereotypes, which gain currency by repetition, but it would be a mistake to pass over them too lightly. They deserve unpicking because they contain historical substance and, to an extent, have configured the way the Welsh have regarded themselves and how others have often described them.

Traditional song of the type found in aural, oral and mainly rural practices has provided the main strand of continuity in Welsh music. From the nineteenth century, a new tradition emerged, as choralism became so widely and popularly practised that it too became one of the country's most quoted features. Welsh music has a coherent history, but taken as a whole it needs special attention, because, like other music cultures that reside fully or partly outside the European mainstream, its values must be understood in terms of its dynamic in the lives of the mass of the people and their communities rather than in those of just a social elite. In this respect, it is helpful to draw on methods used to investigate fields such as popular and non-western music, which show, with a good

degree of consistency, that musical creativity and practice is the product of social processes and not just evolving repertoires.

A further complication is that Welsh music has been both an outsider and an intimate of the mainstream traditions in both art and popular music. The major style periods of European art music seldom map neatly onto the Welsh experience: for example, there is no major manifestation of the baroque or classical periods in Welsh music, and romanticism is revealed only in its broad intellectual and cultural sense rather than in a body of exemplar musical works. On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence of alignments to, and borrowings from, dominant external cultural trends. Secular and sacred music from the earliest periods of which we have knowledge were sophisticated and often show connections to wider European practices. The performance of sacred music in Welsh cathedrals and religious settlements before the sixteenth century always matched wider practices of the Latin Church and later of the Reformation; Lutheran congregational homophony can easily be identified as one of the models used by later Welsh hymnists; and oratorio, or derivatives of it, played an important part in nineteenth-century Welsh choralism. From the twentieth century, three categories of musical activity overlapped: one formed or preserved in the eisteddfod and chapel traditions, another mirroring global developments on both sides of the Atlantic and given pace by new media, and a third deliberately aimed at strengthening the alignment between Welsh music and the mainstream European art tradition. It was this latter strand that led, in the mid-twentieth century, to the professionalisation of a music culture that had previously been dominated by amateurs. Another conspicuous feature of Welsh music, perhaps offering mitigation for the general absence of 'great works', has been its massive emphasis on performance. The engagement of the Welsh with musical performance is discussed elsewhere in this book, but the many great Welsh opera soloists, singers such as Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey and pop groups such as The Manic Street Preachers are each, in different ways, beneficiaries of a tradition of singing and the distinctive structural processes that nurtured it from the early years of the nineteenth century.

There are also species of Welsh music that are unique. They include the oldest forms of which we have knowledge, such as cerdd dant (literally 'string craft'),[1] in which a voice improvises melodic declamations as

[1] 'Penillion' has also been used as the name for later versions of this form, but the genre from which it originated is cerdd dant. For an illustrated description of cerdd dant and penillion see Phyllis Kinney, *Welsh Traditional Music* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 241–246.

a counterpoint to a predetermined instrumental (harp or crwth) melody. Knowledge of the origins of cerdd dant is opaque, mainly because it relied on oral rather than written transmission. It is described in early writings, but the musical sources date from much later than the time when it flourished. The most important is the Robert ap Huw manuscript, containing harp tablatures with extensive annotations.[2] The distinction between cerdd dant and vernacular song is beyond dispute. Sally Harper makes the point that despite all its 'elusive aspects . . . there is no doubt that this was an elevated music with a courtly function'.[3] It was a sophisticated practice, intimately connected to the bardic art cerdd dafod (tongue craft); many songs were settings of declamatory praise poems directed at noble patrons.

Wales, Britain and the Centres of Cultural Production

Leaving aside vernacular forms, the musical life of Britain before the eighteenth century was centred on the court, the larger churches and a relatively thin network of aristocratic and gentry residences. From the eighteenth century, this changed. London became a major centre for a greatly expanded musical life and a destination for leading Continental musicians. Musical commerce flourished, and theatres, concerts, music publishing houses, musical retail and the general paraphernalia of associated requisites took root. By the early nineteenth century, major and lasting institutions such as the Royal Philharmonic Society (1813) and the Royal Academy of Music (1822) had been established. For elite society at this time, subscription concerts had become a feature of 'the season', and while there is scope to question whether the interest of audiences was universally focused on music rather than the social interactions it generated, these congregations prompted the development of an infrastructure within which the music profession flourished, repertoires circulated and an increasingly widening music business functioned efficiently. The same can be said of Dublin and Edinburgh, even if on a smaller scale. Both were metropolitan centres: Edinburgh thrived as a capital city, and Dublin, if only briefly, was the second-largest city in the British Empire. Both had a social elite and institutions that mirrored developments in the British capital; for example, both cities had established national academies before

[2] The Robert ap Huw manuscript (GB-Lbl Add. MS 14905) is given close scrutiny in a special issue of the journal *Welsh Music History/Hanes Cerddoriaeth Cymru* – see Vol. l/Cyf. 3 (1999).
[3] Sally Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 7.

the end of the eighteenth century.[4] At the start of the nineteenth century, London, Edinburgh and Dublin, with populations respectively of 1,088,000, 83,000 and *c*.182,000, were major centres of cultural production,[5] and it was not just material production that was generated: a shared aesthetic developed which led to the formation of yet more agencies and infrastructures that defined and stabilised musical taste and continuities of practice.[6]

Wales had no comparable centre of cultural production in this period and there was no place that could be meaningfully termed 'metropolitan'. Between the death in 1282 of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, the only formally acknowledged native Prince of Wales, and the institution of a devolved Welsh Assembly in 1999, Wales was effectively assimilated with England. The Acts of Union of 1536 and 1543 consolidated the legal status for this arrangement. The Council of Wales and the Marches met at Ludlow between 1471 and 1689,[7] primarily to manage the estates and finances of the Prince of Wales. Provision was also made in Wales for the implementation of English laws and taxes.[8] Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Wales was a rural country with few towns of any size. In 1801, the most populated settlement was Merthyr Tydfil with 7,705 people. The largest towns in the north were Caernarfon in the west (3,626) and Wrexham in the east (2,575).[9] At this time Cardiff, which was not formally the Welsh capital until 1955, had a population of less than 2,000.

Merthyr Tydfil, on the northern rim of the south Wales valleys, owed its development to its iron industry. It was to remain the largest town in Wales until the 1870s, when it was overtaken by Cardiff, which grew as a seaport to serve the massive industrial expansion in the southern valleys that made Wales the world's most important centre for the production of steam coal. This phase caused a commensurate demographic shift in which internal migration from the rural areas to the industrial valleys, and immigration from England and Ireland, caused cultural adjustments for the entire

[4] The Royal Society of Edinburgh was founded in 1783, the Royal Irish Academy in 1785.

[5] The populations of London (county of) and Edinburgh are taken from the 1801 census; that for Dublin is from James Whitelaw's *An Essay on the Population of Dublin* (Dublin: Graisberry and Campbell, 1805), p. 15, which is widely cited and based on Whitelaw's 1798 house-to-house survey.

[6] For an outline of concert life in London at this time, see Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[7] The Council was abolished by Parliament in 1641, revived in 1660 and finally abolished in 1689.

[8] For an overview of the various legal systems that have operated in Wales, see Thomas Glyn Watkin, *The Legal History of Wales*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

[9] Unless otherwise stated, data in this chapter is from L. J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics* (Cardiff: The Welsh Office, 1998). Relevant pages for this passage are pp. 62–64.

country. For the greater part of the nineteenth century, a period which saw formidable advances in most developed countries, there was in Wales neither a place nor formal secular agencies that provided an official administrative or cultural focus. There was no university until 1872, when the first University College of Wales opened in Aberystwyth.[10] Following a popular petition, the National Library of Wales was established in 1907, also in Aberystwyth (see Figure 1.1). The placing of both institutions in the largest settlement geographically central to the country is indicative of the best logic that could have been applied at a time when neither the north nor the south held undisputed sway as the dominant centre of cultural influence. The Established Church, under the control of Canterbury, was the sole official British agency other than those concerned with the law or taxation.

Figure 1.1 The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, 1941. Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru – National Library of Wales

[10] St David's College, Lampeter, which was to become a constituent college of the University of Wales in 1971, originated in 1822 as a training college for the clergy.

Present throughout Wales, it had a mixed reputation among the laity: while many held it in affection for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it became largely unloved and perceived as 'English'. In the nineteenth century, realities such as these were primary causes for two unprescribed agencies to fill the void and provide a surrogate structure for the future development of musical life and, to an extent, the cultural coherence of Welsh society more generally: the revived and reconstructed form of the ancient Welsh eisteddfod, and the rapid consolidation of religious nonconformity.

History, Identity and Language

For much of its history, Wales has had a distinct and widely acknowledged cultural identity, but no administrative autonomy. Musical life has often been perceived as an agent in the formation of that identity. Whether this idea is realistic or sentimental can be considered from different but connected perspectives. One is that indigenous music and its associated practices transmit signals of identity by association; another (similar and obviously connected) is the reverse: that music makers consciously or subconsciously act out imitations of ethnic characteristics shaped over time that eventually find resolution through consensus.[11] Yet another, but also connected, is that by the twentieth century, cultural identities owed much to 'the invention of traditions', a common process in the nineteenth century when so many national identities were forming or selectively revising their tone and shape.[12] Each of these ideas has purchase in the story of Wales, but it would be wrong to underestimate the depth of history from which the Welsh can legitimately summon evidence of their distinctive ethnicity: many sources seem to testify to it. For example, Bernard, the first Norman bishop in Wales, writing to the Pope around 1140 to argue a case for the establishment of a discrete archbishopric for Wales (that by implication would be distinct from that of England), described it as 'entirely . . . a nation (*natione*), in language, laws, habits, modes of judgement and customs'.[13] The musical life of the country has

[11] See, for example, Simon Frith, 'Music and Identity', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), an exploration of such ideas in respect of modern popular music.

[12] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[13] R. R. Davies, 'The Peoples of Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (December 1994), 10. Davies makes the point that Bernard's prospective candidature for such a post, if it were created, may have caused him to emphasise the distinctiveness of Wales.

played an important part in those 'customs' in the sense that the social rituals of music making have contributed to the formation of collective memories that strengthen feelings of ethnicity.[14] Ultimately, three clearly discernible factors can be cited in support of the claim that Welsh music is distinctive. First, it contains genres, practices, agencies and even instruments that are absent, in the same form, from music cultures elsewhere. Second, to an unusual extent, ideas about the Welsh as a 'musical nation' have been inspired by, and even constructed from, interpretations of the country's cultural past, and irrespective of the veracity of those interpretations it remains the case that cultural inheritance has been a recurrent topic in historical narratives about Welsh music. And third, in almost every era, but especially before the twentieth century, the Welsh musical aesthetic has been shaped by the country's cultural, political, social, demographic and religious developments. To these factors can also be added a more provocative suggestion. In contrast to the experience of many other nations, particularly those of the British Isles, from at least the late eighteenth century the relationship between the mass of the people and music has been relatively uninhibited by gender or social class. The Welsh music tradition is the product of an unusual level of democratic engagement.

The population of Wales in 1600, calculated from an average of baptisms, burials and marriages, was a little over 350,000.[15] In 1801, by which time the first phase of industrialisation had occurred, it had grown to 587,245; by 1901 it was more than 2 million, and by 1970 it had risen to a little over 2,700,000.[16] Before the mid-nineteenth century, the country had a relatively small aristocracy, most of whom were absentee, and a larger gentry and mercantile class. The gentry included those who occupied the estates that covered large parts of the country. Many had country residences that maintained musicians, and from the later eighteenth century, the gentry was also responsible for funding the 'bands of music' attached to county militia but also serving the social needs of the gentry class. By this time, and to an unusual extent, many of the gentry families were joined through marriage to English or Scottish dynasties.[17] The massive majority

[14] See, for example, David Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[15] Williams, *Digest*, vol. 1, p. 6. [16] Ibid., p. 7.

[17] The unusual factor is the extent to which the men of these families remained unmarried or produced no male heirs. On this point see Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapter 2. For a list and map of the estates of Wales in the eighteenth century, see Peter D. G. Thomas, *Politics in Eighteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. x–xi.

of the population was proletarian: working on the land or in other modes of craft or labour. The conspicuous difference between the English and the Welsh among this class was that they spoke a different language. Welsh was the language of most of the population until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the most emphatic phase of industrialisation occurred. It was always both a vernacular language and the language of poets and learning: the richest and most ethnic strands of the Welsh music tradition are bound intimately to the language – most obviously cerdd dant, traditional song and nonconformist hymn singing. From the nineteenth century onwards, Wales began to become a more bilingual country because of immigration and educational legislation, but while the proportion of Welsh speakers decreased in Wales as a whole, it continued to be the dominant language in some industrial areas as well as the rural counties.

As is the case with most languages, among its speakers Welsh has always been more than a mode of communication: it has cultural weight. Those raised in the language regard it as a natural part of their being. A decline in its use was apparent in 1891 when the census (the first to measure language preference) recorded just 54 per cent of its population as Welsh speakers, but while the number had decreased further in percentage terms because of a rise in the population of the country, the actual number of Welsh speakers increased until 1911 when the census recorded a total of 977,366 Welsh speakers.[18] The trend was downwards in the twentieth century, and in 1981 Welsh was spoken by just 19 per cent of the population, but subsequent measures, including legislation and the provision of Welsh-medium education, have stimulated a dramatic reversal.[19]

Historicism, Romanticism and Eisteddfodau

From at least the fifteenth century onwards, the roads between Wales and the British capital were well-trod by those who sought intellectual, pecuniary or other advancements. One estimate suggests that even by the late sixteenth century more than 5 per cent of London households might have been of Welsh descent.[20] In the eighteenth century, the London Welsh

[18] Williams, *Digest*, Vol. 1, p. 78.

[19] In 2017 the Welsh government published its ambitious Cymraeg 2050 strategy, aiming to create a million Welsh speakers by 2050. Demographic signs suggest it could exceed that target. The Welsh Government Annual Population Survey (September 2020) showed that 28.8 per cent of the population spoke Welsh.

[20] W. P. Griffith, 'Tudor Prelude', in *The Welsh in London 1500–2000*, ed. by Emrys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 10–11.

started to organise themselves into coherent societies. There was a Welsh school in London from 1717, and in 1751 the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (broadly, 'the Earliest Natives') was founded to promote learning and philanthropy among the London Welsh. Other Welsh societies were established in London over the following two centuries, but the Cymmrodorion Society was the most significant and enduring. The importance of these organisations should not be underestimated, for in their midst, at various times, were some of the most influential Welsh musicians, including Edward Jones (Bardd y Brenin; 1752–1824), the harpist and antiquary, whose *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards* (1784) is one of the most important early published sources for Welsh traditional music; the harpist John Thomas (Pencerdd Gwalia; 1826–1913), a writer, teacher at the Royal Academy of Music and harpist to Queen Victoria; and the pianist and composer Brinley Richards (Cerddor Towy; 1817–85), one of the most prominent motivators of the Cymmrodorion Society and a major wheeler-dealer in musical life between Wales and London. The importance of these organisations was twofold: they created an influential and articulate lobby for Wales and Welsh culture in the British capital, and from the late eighteenth century onwards, they provided a conspicuous focus for interest in the ancient origins of a distinctively Welsh cultural and musical aesthetic. Special attention was directed at the idea that poetic and musical culture had been nurtured in Wales from the twelfth century onwards in the bardic assemblies that became known as eisteddfodau (literally 'sittings' in the sense of 'sessions').[21] Many protagonists of a revival of this culture were speculators rather than conscientious scholars, but they were to have a profound influence on the way the Welsh and their music were understood or imagined, both within and outside Wales.

The instigation of a new version of the eisteddfod from the late eighteenth century had a major impact on the course of Welsh music. Original eisteddfodau were competitive events, and while they included instrumentalists even in their earliest manifestation, their primary focus was on poetry. One of the more significant temporary figures of the eighteenth-century London-Welsh fraternity was Edward Williams (Iolo Morganwg; 1747–1826), a Glamorganshire stonemason and intellectual polymath. Iolo has been the subject of prolonged and rigorous scholarly attention that has revealed him to be a vastly talented, many-sided individual who played

[21] Though these events had a much older ancestry, there is no evidence of the word 'eisteddfod' being used to describe them prior to the 1520s.

a critical part in shaping the romantic tradition of Wales. In 1792, as part of his druidic-bardic obsession, he assembled the first meeting of a gorsedd (an assembly of bards) at Primrose Hill, London. He introduced the gorsedd into the eisteddfod at Carmarthen in 1819, and from then on it was a permanent and central component of eisteddfod ritual. However, Iolo is most famous for his claim that he had discovered authentic early Welsh literary works, particularly those of the fourteenth-century poet Dafydd ap Gwilym (*c.*1320–70). Doubts were voiced in the nineteenth century by Sir John Morris-Jones of the University of North Wales, Bangor, but it was not until the Cardiff University academic G. J. Williams concluded a prolonged forensic examination that some of Iolo's 'discoveries' were revealed to be no more than brilliant forgeries.[22] By this time, the deceptions had been enthusiastically digested and had thereby made a significant contribution to both a Celtic revival and a lasting reconstitution of the eisteddfod. In this one sense, the eisteddfod that took shape in the Victorian era benefited from invention, but it would be entirely wrong to disregard its genuine origins or its positive effect on Welsh cultural life. It is also important to stress that Iolo lacked neither brilliance, knowledge nor veracity in most of his endeavours. He was not alone in taking an imaginative approach to Welsh history: many espoused its literary and musical richness while knowing much less about it than Iolo.

Such idealisation of the past is a shared feature of romantic movements more generally. In Wales, however, and irrespective of any truths, half-truths or forgeries that contributed directly or indirectly to its re-establishment, the eisteddfod took on enormous significance. Within two or three decades, eisteddfodau were being arranged across the country, and what had originated as primarily poetic events took on a more musical character. Furthermore, the competitive element engendered a level of popular enthusiasm that was unprecedented. Local eisteddfodau stimulated tribal loyalties as towns, villages and even hamlets pinned their hopes on local heroes and heroines. Criticism of the competitive ethos came from some of the distinguished English musicians who saw no inconsistency in accepting remuneration for adjudicating them. The English composer Frederic Hymen Cowen (1852–1935), having adjudicated at the Cardiff Eisteddfod in 1910, concluded that 'the Eisteddfod rather retards the progress of the music in Wales than advances it ... the purely competitive side seems to loom so largely as

[22] For an overview of these and other assessments, see Geraint H. Jenkins, 'On the Trail of a "Rattleskull Genius": Introduction', in *A Rattleskull Genius: The Many Faces of Iolo Morganwg*, ed. by Geraint H. Jenkins (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), pp. 1–28.

completely to overshadow everything else'.[23] Some probably shared this view, but Cowen was emphatically missing the point: his judgement was uttered from the temperate cultural position he usually inhabited.[24] Eisteddfod contesting was not temperate – it was hot and musically exciting. Irrespective of the partisanship it usually promoted among audiences, it caused them to listen intently and focus discerningly on what they heard: ultimately, it nurtured discriminating musical tastes. In nineteenth-century Wales, it was the thrill of contest that stimulated communities to musical engagement, and it followed that eisteddfodau at local and national levels formed a structure that compensated for the national cultural apparatus that Wales otherwise lacked.

Somewhat paradoxically, given the imaginative impetus that had contributed so markedly to the rebirth of eisteddfodau, one of its first and most valuable products was the instigation of measures for capturing and curating authentic Welsh musical traditions. At the Abergavenny eisteddfod in 1837, a prize was awarded 'for the best collection of original unpublished Welsh airs, with the words as sung by the peasantry of Wales'.[25] The winner was Maria Jane Williams of Aberpergwm (Llinos; 1795–1873), who later published much of that collection in her *Ancient National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg* (1844), one of the first collections based entirely on ethnographical research of Welsh vernacular song. Though the musical manifestation of eisteddfodau was to take various turns, the preservation of repertoires and practices that were indigenously Welsh comes primarily from such initiatives. There were earlier publications of song, described later in this book, but the attention paid to the traditions of Welsh music in eisteddfodau and the subsequent establishment of the Welsh Folk-Song Society (Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru) in 1906 are undoubtedly the foundation of its lasting status in the musical life of the country.

Religion

While eisteddfodau operated at national and local levels, they were not entirely uniform. Local eisteddfodau were a law unto themselves, and the

[23] Quoted in Percy Scholes, *The Mirror of Music 1844–1944*, Vol. 2 (London: Novello & Co. with Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 643.

[24] For an English overview of the eisteddfod and of Welsh music more generally, see John Graham, *A Century of Welsh Music* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1923).

[25] Meredydd Evans, 'Pwy Oedd "Orpheus" Eisteddfod Llangollen 1858?/Who Was "Orpheus" of the 1858 Llangollen Eisteddfod?', *Welsh Music History/Hanes Cerddoriaeth Cymru*, 5 (2002), 65. The manuscript source for 'Orpheus' is GB-AB Minor Deposits 150B.

intense competitive spirit they stirred is illustrative of how the absence of metropolitan centres elevated the importance of locality. Community coherence was also enhanced by religious life, especially from the time that nonconformity took root. Both eisteddfodau and the choral societies formed in chapels and through other agencies (such as the temperance movement) played an important part in the formation of vibrant communities.

The Church in Britain was the Church of Rome until the first Act of Supremacy (1534), which ended the authority of the Pope in the kingdom and created the Church of England with the sovereign at its head. Wales was then organised into four dioceses under the Province of Canterbury. In 1914, after decades of pressure, some of it from the London-based Liberation Society that had been formed in 1844, the Welsh Church Act (1914) disestablished the Welsh Church from the Church of England; it took the title 'The Church in Wales' but remained part of the Anglican Communion.[26] Disestablishment was the result of several sometimes-related factors. There had been unconnected popular protest movements from the start of the nineteenth century but a more organised form of political radicalism emerged from the 1860s with the appearance of the radical wing of the Liberal Party. The Representation of the People Act of 1867 enfranchised new categories of voters, with the result that the Welsh electorate more than doubled. The 1868 General Election increased the number of Liberal Members of Parliament for the Welsh constituencies. There were many causes for discontent with the Established Church. The obligatory tithe levies that sustained the churches and their clergy provided no discernible benefits for the people and were regarded as an unwarranted privilege by the dissenters. There was also a widely shared sense that the Church, especially its leadership, was a persistent force for cultural anglicisation. Attitudes to England had taken a sharply negative turn from 1847 when British government commissioners produced a derisory *Report on the State of Education in Wales* (popularly referred to as 'the Blue Books') that characterised the Welsh population as backward, uncivilised and prone to moral turpitude. Furthermore, it proposed that the primary cause of such backwardness was the persistent use of the Welsh rather than the English

[26] The Act became law in 1914, but because of the intervention of World War I it was not enacted until 1920. As well as the Act of Disestablishment, there was an Act of Disendowment, which saw the endowments of the old Established Church distributed to the colleges of the University of Wales, the National Library and the County Councils. See Norman Doe, ed., *A New History of the Church in Wales: Governance and Ministry, Theology and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), and Watkin, *Legal History*.

language. It was a remarkable condemnation, deeply and lastingly felt by the population, more so because of the brutal and imperialistic terms in which it was expressed.[27] The sense of resentment, especially at the idea that English was the language of education and advancement, lingered for decades. Thirty years later, in an address on 'Social life in rural Wales', the politician T. E. Ellis cited the dogmatic views of 'the English' whose 'estimate of Wales and Welshmen [is] ... still very largely coloured by the infamous report of three young barristers who formed the Welsh Education Commission of 1847'.[28] But the force that encouraged disestablishment most influentially was the relentless growth of religious nonconformity.

It is difficult to overstate the impact of nonconformity on Welsh life and its music culture. Though there were Independent movements somewhat earlier, large-scale religious dissent originated in Wales as a Calvinistic Methodist movement within the Established Church in the eighteenth century. It grew massively from 1811 when the Welsh Methodists separated from the Church of England, but there were other dissenting denominations as well as Methodism. Nonconformist chapels became a defining feature of the Welsh landscape: in the first fifty years of the century, an average of one new chapel was opened in Wales every eight days.[29] This prompted an impressive and probably well-meaning response from the Established Church: new churches were opened, those that had been left to languish were restored, and an 'army of assistant clergy' was deployed. Between 1832 and 1879 the number of resident incumbents had risen from 450 to 785, but even all this was both too late and insufficiently effective.[30] The religious census administered by the government official Horace Mann in 1851 revealed that only 19.31 per cent of those who attended a place of worship on the day of the census attended churches. The remaining majority went to nonconformist chapels. Independents and Welsh Methodists alone accounted for 60 per cent. Wales had rapidly become a nonconformist nation.[31]

Nonconformity brought with it strict and often stifling moral codes that frequently left congregations confused and fearful. Sermonising became at

[27] The episode became known as 'The Treason of the Blue Books', taking the title from the colour of the cover of the report itself and the title of an 1854 play by R. J. Derfel, which satirised the report. For a discussion of the language of the report, see Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: Wales and Colonial Prejudice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011).

[28] Thomas E. Ellis, *Speeches and Addresses by the Late T. E. Ellis* (Wrexham: Hughes & Son, 1912), p. 119.

[29] Jeffrey Gainer, 'The Road to Disestablishment', in Doe, *A New History*, p. 31.

[30] Roger L. Brown, 'The Age of Saints to the Victorian Church', in Doe, *A New History*, p. 23.

[31] Ibid., p. 23.

once an inspiration, an art, a fetish and a device for social as well as moral control. Some saw nonconformity as an infringement that acted negatively on the country's traditions, including its traditional music, and there is evidence of individuals destroying or burying musical instruments in the heat of religious revivals.[32] Edward Jones (Bardd y Brenin), based in London but an ardent advocate of Welsh music, identified such dangers as early as 1802:

> The sudden decline of the national Minstrelsy, and Customs of Wales, is in a great degree to be attributed to the fanatick impostors, or illiterate plebeian preachers, who have too often been suffered to over-run the country, misleading the greater part of the common people from their lawful Church; and dissuading them from their innocent amusements, such as Singing, Dancing, and other rural Sports, and Games, which heretofore they had been accustomed to delight in, from the earliest time.[33]

However, there is scope to doubt whether Jones's pessimism was fully justified. Leaving aside the benefits that nonconformity provided for choralism, there were other offshoots of Christian evangelism, some originating in the radical wing of the eighteenth-century Established Church, that had a permanent and beneficial influence on the intellectual and aesthetic life of the nation.

Fundamental to most forms of evangelism was a belief in the urgent requirement for the mass of the people to engage with the scriptures. Schemes initiated by reformers, particularly the clergyman Griffith Jones of Llanddowror (1683–1761), were put in place to teach children and adults to read.[34] Griffith Jones had a didactic bent and advocated comprehensibility over the type of sermonising that was replete with 'lofty phrases' that were beyond the common understanding.[35] He devised and enacted one of the most successful educational experiments in Wales before the twentieth century. His 'circulating schools' system saw groups of itinerant teachers moving from village to village, teaching literacy intensively over a few weeks before moving to a new location. The new converts would then take the cause yet further in their communities to create a legacy of reading, implicitly stabilising the Welsh language yet further. During his lifetime

[32] Several such instances are cited in Roy Saer, *'Canu at Iws' ac Ysgrifau Eraill/'Song for Use' and Other Articles* (Talybont: Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru, 2013), pp. 298–304.

[33] Edward Jones, *The Bardic Museum* (London: A. Strahan, 1802), p. xvi. Digitised by the National Library of Wales http://hdl.handle.net/10107/4675439.

[34] It is possible that in a later age Griffith Jones would have been a nonconformist. He was frequently brought before his superiors for departing from church laws and customs. People came from considerable distances to hear his sermons, which were often delivered on mountainsides.

[35] Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales 1642–1780* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 181.

Jones and his followers taught an estimated quarter of a million people to read.[36] As a result, by the mid-nineteenth century this scheme and similar initiatives had made Wales one of the most literate countries in the world.[37]

Literacy had a critical impact on musical life. A capacity to engage with written verbal texts was but a step away from an ability to engage with notated music, and this, if the sale of hymn books is a reliable indicator, appears to be what happened in nineteenth-century Wales. Musical literacy circulated among the working class in two phases: 'yr hen nodiant' ('old notation' – or staff notation), and the more popular tonic sol-fa, which was introduced in the 1860s. The sales figures for *Llyfr Tonau Cynulleidfaol* (Congregational Tune Book) by John Roberts (Ieuan Gwyllt; 1822–77), which was put out in staff notation in 1859 (17,000 copies) and sol-fa in 1863 (25,000 copies), are usually deployed to illustrate the popularity of the sol-fa system, especially because of the speed at which stocks were exhausted.[38] But it is worth noting that the book contained almost no verbal text beyond its preface: it was a *tune* book organised into metric forms to which words might be applied. Yet even in 1859, 17,000 people, the equivalent of a third of the total population of Wales's largest town at that time, were able to engage meaningfully with staff and stave notation.

Nonconformist chapels quickly became centres of communal life in which congregational singing functioned both as an act of devotion and a mode of social leisure: most of the choral societies so formed also competed at eisteddfodau. Other agents for social reform, such as the temperance movement, used musical practice as a form of 'rational recreation'. But the term had a different nuance in Wales than in England, where it was used by more elevated classes to define self-improving pastimes among the working class that were worthy of their benevolence. In Wales, the engagement with choralism was more instinctive, spontaneous, organic and in all senses popular.

Genders and Diasporas

From at least the mid-nineteenth century discrimination against female musicians was less apparent in Wales than elsewhere. This might, at least in

[36] John Davies, Nigel Jenkins, Menna Baines and Peredur I. Lynch, eds., *The Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 424.

[37] For an overview of the history of publishing in Wales, see Philip Henry Jones and Eiluned Rees, eds., *A Nation and Its Books: A History of the Book in Wales* (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1998).

[38] The 1859 edition has been digitised by the National Library of Wales: http://hdl.handle.net/10107/4814268.

part, be due to the prominence of vocal and especially mixed-voice choral music, which is democratised by necessity. When the Welsh Choral Union famously won the choral contest at the Crystal Palace in 1872 and 1873, a moment of vast importance in Welsh music history, national heroines were lauded in equal proportion to heroes, and this had a lasting effect. The historian John Rosselli, writing of the development of music in nineteenth-century Italy, noted the myriad inhibitions that women musicians endured, even in a country with such a buoyant tradition of vocal music, because of the weighty authority of the Catholic Church and the imposition of the values of a social elite.[39] There were fewer such impediments in Wales, and nonconformity had the opposite effect: it was the church of the common people in which the laity were able to organise themselves culturally rather than having their spirituality and modes of operation imposed from above.[40] Ministers were often itinerant, so their individual influence was not sustained, and there was consequently a strong tradition of lay leadership. Choralism was a product of this cultural process and it probably also contributed to a tradition in which women became more broadly prominent in the country's musical life. There are examples of communities supporting women musicians: for instance, a committee was formed at Dowlais in 1863 for the sole purpose of supporting the musical training of Megan Watts Hughes (1847–1907), the local soloist of the Gwent and Morganwg Choral Association, and this included her studentship at the Royal Academy of Music.[41]

Even when male choirs became extremely popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was in parallel with other formulations in which women were either constituents or the leading proponents. One of the first and best to rise through the ranks of choralism was Sarah Edith Wynne (Eos Cymru; 1842–97). She was raised in Flintshire, joined the Holywell Choral Society when only nine years old, took to singing Welsh airs as a soloist while in her teens and by the 1860s was one of the stars of London's musical life. There were many other famous female mentors. The writings of the hymn poet Ann Griffiths (1776–1805) were an inspiration for many

[39] John Rosselli, *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The Role of the Impresario* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and John Rosselli, *Music and Musicians in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1991).

[40] R. Tudur Jones, *Faith and the Crisis of a Nation: Wales 1890–1914*, ed. by Robert Pope and trans. by Sylvia Prys Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 38–39.

[41] David Morgans, *Music and Musicians of Merthyr and District* (Merthyr Tydfil: H. W. Southey, 1922), p. 118. Morgans gives her birth date as 1842, and other subsequent sources follow him. However, census records state that she was four years old in 1851. She was born Megan Watts; Watts Hughes was her married name, and her first name sometimes appears in anglicised form as Margaret.

later texts that were set to hymn tunes. Maria Jane Williams was among the most important of the traditional song collectors, and her legacy was taken up by women such as Ruth Herbert Lewis (1871–1946), Mary Davies (1855–1930), Grace Gwyneddon Davies (1878–1944) and Dora Herbert Jones (1890–1974), who were leading figures in the Welsh Folk-Song Society. Maria Jane Williams's friend and patron Lady Llanover was a major figure in the Celtic revival, not merely as a benefactor but as a strategist who acted as a catalyst for others. The teacher and conductor Clara Novello Davies (Pencerddes Morgannwg; 1861–1943) had a significant influence on singing in the late Victorian and Edwardian period and was one of the first musicians to forge a career as a professional musician with the future Welsh capital as her base. Many, possibly most, of the greatest harpists and singers have been women, including Nansi Richards (Telynores Maldwyn; 1888–1979), who was acknowledged by the great twentieth-century virtuoso harpist Osian Ellis as 'Queen of the Harp'. Composers such as Morfydd Llwyn Owen (1891–1918) and Grace Williams (1906–77) rose significantly above the mediocrity that characterised the work of most of their male counterparts.

From its foundation, the University of Wales admitted women as students and teachers – Dora Herbert Jones was one such. A review of the University in 1916 noted that 'absolute equality of the sexes has always been a fundamental principle of its charter' and even at the time, the review could note that 'women [formed a] . . . large proportion of its students'.[42] And there has been a parallel tradition that has prevailed to modern times in which women have often played a leading part in radical political movements.[43] It is easy to speculate that this feature of Welsh musical life owes much to the absence in Wales of those Georgian and Victorian metropolitan agencies discussed earlier in this chapter that elsewhere implicitly nurtured male domination, but an important reason for the ease with which women navigated musical life was their place in what was primarily a working-class society. Women's engagement with singing in the home and locality was natural. Eisteddfod contests were organised into categories, some, but not all, by gender, but contestants almost always assumed a role representative of the place from which they came. It

[42] *Final Report of the Royal Commission on University Education in Wales* (London: HMSO, 1918), p. 68. These points were being made to encourage the University to move yet further in recruiting women to its teaching staff and to have them routinely represented in its senate.

[43] See Angela V. John, ed., *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830–1939* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991).

followed that all competitors of genuine talent were eagerly sought, encouraged and celebrated, and gender was seldom used as a barrier.

Clara Novello Davies and her Welsh Ladies' Choir were victors at the famous Welsh eisteddfod held as part of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. The fact that an eisteddfod was held as a component of such an event is illustrative of the remarkable reputation that Wales was gaining as a 'land of song'. There were Welsh colonies in Patagonia, Oceania and North America, and in each place, the visible indicator of the Welsh presence was a nonconformist chapel that hosted the hymn-singing festivals known as cymanfaoedd canu, and eisteddfodau.[44] Welsh choirs toured the world, performing to packed houses in what had developed into a formulaic 'Welsh' idiom, and money was to be made. Individual musicians made a good living by travelling the world singing, adjudicating eisteddfodau or conducting. Remarkably, this brand of Welsh music, which developed into a commercial stereotype, was to continue for most of the century, but it ran in parallel with other important developments set in motion early in the new century, when such stereotypes were challenged.

Traditions and Disruptions

By the second decade of the twentieth century it was possible to view Welsh music with equivocation: to see amid the buoyancy of its popular traditions the possibility that it was less a beneficiary of them than a casualty. The repetitive cycle of eisteddfodau and cymanfaoedd canu had stimulated a remarkable level of popular musical participation, created a choral repertoire and ensured the survival of traditional song. Furthermore, the eisteddfod system had provided a structure that assured continuities. The concern focused on whether all this was at the expense of 'progress'. Cyril Jenkins (1885–1978), a Swansea-born composer who spent most of his life travelling the globe as an adjudicator, organist, choral conductor and composer, was one of the most intrepid critics of what he identified as the insular and self-absorbed Welsh music establishment, by which he meant the National Eisteddfod committee and the small coterie of academic musicians attached to the University of Wales. In 1913 he delivered the first of many pronouncements aimed at this group. 'Wales', he said, 'has no composer of the first, or even the second rank'.[45] It has to be

[44] See Ronald Rees, *A Nation of Singing Birds: Sermon and Song in Wales and among the Welsh in North America* (Talybont: Y Lolfa, 2021).

[45] Quoted in David Ian Allsobrook, *Music for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), p. 42.

said that Jenkins was himself no stranger to mediocrity if his own compositions are anything to go by, but otherwise, he had an important point. There was no body of art music repertoire of any discernible worth and no prospect of it emerging; and if it had, there would have been neither a resident body of educated professional musicians to perform it nor dedicated edifices in which it could be heard.

It was against this background that a Royal Commission on University Education in Wales was assembled in 1916, the year that the Welsh Liberal politician David Lloyd George (1863–1945) became prime minister. The Commission's purpose was straightforward: 'to inquire into the organisation and work of the University of Wales and its three constituent Colleges', and consider improvements in its organisation, constitution, functions and powers.[46] Its conclusions had direct and transformative implications for the musical life of Wales. The Commission was chaired by Richard Burton Haldane (Viscount Haldane; 1856–1928) and among its eight other members was William Henry Hadow (1859–1937), a former Oxford University music academic and a talented musician and scholar, but also a rounded intellectual destined to hold senior positions in English universities. The wisdom contained in the report, certainly as far as music is concerned, owes much to Hadow's interventions and Haldane's accommodation of them. Both were men of considerable enlightenment and organisational flair who have been treated with undue lightness by historians.

Two things are especially striking in the final report delivered in 1918: the extent to which music was considered as rigorously and conscientiously as any other subject in the University's curriculum, including technology, the sciences, agriculture and Celtic studies; and the obvious intent on the part of the Commission that the University of Wales should become a national agency charged with the maintenance and elevation of the nation's musical standards. The idea of the University having a national role was prominent in the British government's thinking. By this time the three Welsh colleges (Bangor, Aberystwyth and Cardiff) were components of a federal University of Wales, but there was concern that they were overly focused on 'local interests' at the expense of 'the whole principality'. This concern had particular importance by 1914 when the idea of a National (Welsh) School of Medicine was under consideration. It was felt that for the developing university to fulfil a national role and engage public interest

[46] *Final Report*, p. 9.

in this development, there needed to be revisions to its constitution and its operational practices.[47]

Among the Commission's final recommendations were the strengthening of the music departments in each of the three constituent colleges, advocacy for a closer liaison between the university and Welsh primary and secondary schools, the extension of the remit of the University of Wales Press to publish Welsh music and, most radically, the immediate implementation of a structure that would see the University engage with bodies such as national and local eisteddfodau, to raise standards and create a greater understanding of the music of the European classical tradition.

The Commission was aware that its interventions might be interpreted as an imposition, especially by eisteddfod organisers: 'It is obvious that here great care would have to be exercised in order to avoid any appearance of patronage or interference.' But equally, it did not hold back from trenchant criticism, most based on the evidence of Welsh witnesses. Due deference was paid to the richness of Welsh musical life and its traditions, but it was noted that at the 1916 Eisteddfod only one string quartet had entered, and the prize for a work of chamber music had attracted no competitors at all. It concluded that 'to a large number of the Welsh people the whole literature of symphonic and concerted music is virtually a sealed book'. Even cymanfaoedd canu did not escape castigation: it was noted that the cymanfa held at the National Eisteddfod in 1917 'was marred by the inclusion of some modern sentimental tunes which had no right to any place in such a gathering'. The general conclusion was that: 'Although there is much singing in the country, it must be confessed that there is no corresponding progress in musical taste and knowledge.'[48]

The commissioners were clearly aware that their judgements could be at odds with those of the people to whom they were directed, and sensitive to the reality that their recommendations would be understood in cultural as well as practical terms:

> Closely connected to the above [criticisms] is the curious fact that a high proportion of the conductors of the smaller choirs, and precentors and the teachers of music classes are untrained; frequently they are artisans who have

[47] The quoted passages are from a Treasury Minute dated 30 January 1915 (GB-Lna T 1/11948). This and other documents that provide a background to the Commission and the relationship between the government and the University of Wales are included in Treasury files primarily concerned with the funding of a Welsh School of Medicine and of the University of Wales more generally. The files include a letter dated 29 November 1915 from the governing body of the University of Wales, which requests a Royal Commission.

[48] *Final Report*, p. 85.

> enjoyed no educational advantages beyond elementary school. In most cases they refuse to give way to the professional musicians, and often for good reason. Their musical instinct, their unselfish though unrequited labours, and their tact in the management of men enable them to maintain an influence over their fellow singers which many trained musicians entirely fail to secure. One would be sorry to see this unique democratic factor disappear.[49]

The strategy recommended by the Commission, which was subsequently put in place, involved a twofold arrangement. The University of Wales would 'establish an office of Musical Director' who would have primacy in the organisation of music across all three colleges, and that same person would also be chair of a 'Council of Music in Wales', the membership of which would include the professors from the other two colleges and representatives from other interested bodies such as the Association of Headmasters and Headmistresses, the Welsh Folk-Song Society and the National Eisteddfod Association. Various suggestions were made as to how this Council should conduct its business, but it was made abundantly clear that it should act as 'the supreme consultative body on all matters with which the musical education of Wales is concerned'.[50] It was equally obvious that 'musical education' was to be understood in its widest sense and not just as it applied to formal, institutional curricula. The Council was to encourage 'an embodiment and expression of Welsh nationality in music [but] not by excluding or discouraging the practice of the great masterpieces of other countries'.[51]

Perhaps mindful of how ill-advised it would be to imply that such measures were fashioned on English tastes, it cited a surprisingly different model:

> Such a Council might do for music in Wales what, rather more than half a century ago, a group of enthusiasts did for that of Russia. The material on which Moussorgsky [*sic*] and his friends set to work was certainly not richer than that which is at the disposal of Welsh musicians to-day: the great fabric of Russian music which they have built up is a standing example of the value of a national movement widely conceived and skilfully treated.[52]

It was clear that the success of these proposals would depend on the principal executant: the new 'Director of Music'. The University looked beyond Wales and appointed Henry Walford Davies (1869–1941) to the vacant chair at Aberystwyth, which would be combined with the wider responsibilities.[53] A former Royal College of Music scholar, a composition

[49] Ibid. [50] Ibid., p. 87. [51] Ibid. [52] Ibid., p. 88.
[53] Davies was of Welsh parentage and had been born in Oswestry on the Welsh border.

pupil of both C. H. H. Parry and Stanford, at the time of his appointment he was organist and choirmaster of the Temple Church. Davies held the post from 1919 to 1926, but he continued to chair the Council until his death in 1941, by which time he had succeeded Elgar as Master of the King's Music. He was a skilled composer, but above all a masterful communicator on music, especially through the new medium of the wireless. He also guided the Council of Music to set up music appreciation classes in rural and urban areas for working people. In all his work he had the desired effect of instilling a greater attachment to the mainstream of European music without obliterating the traditions that already flourished.

The composer David Wynne (1900–83) claimed half a century after the Council of Music was formed that it had 'played a greater part in changing the musical attitude of Welshmen than probably any other single factor'.[54] He was probably right in that the major consequence of the Haldane Report was that it altered the course of Welsh music. Traditional song, including cerdd dant, along with the multiplicity of musical practices that were embraced by eisteddfodau and chapel culture, had been the products of essentially organic processes. The Council of Music in Wales was prescriptive: the first official body instituted in the country with the intention of steering music in a unified direction. Walford Davies should probably be judged as popular and successful, but neither he nor his acolytes were devoid of elitist cultural baggage. He had little good to say about another influence that was active in Wales as strongly as it was elsewhere by the 1920s: the rise of new forms of commercial popular music.

Davies had little interest in commercial popular music, which he often referred to as 'jazz bands'. Others were capable of greater discrimination. Ross McKibbin has referred to a middlebrow canon that emerged at this time: a form of 'respectable' light music that captured the attention of a vast sector of the public between the wars.[55] This music, characterised by heavily programmatic, usually romantic content, eclipsed even the favourites of the Victorian music hall in popularity. It came to Wales in live performances, through the bands of silent movie houses, and later the talkies, the gramophone and BBC radio. It also ushered in romanticised performance conventions, including highly sentimental presentation formats of traditional Welsh song. Surprisingly, these developments

[54] Quoted in Meic Stephens, ed., *The Arts in Wales 1950–75* (Cardiff: The Welsh Arts Council, 1979), p. 9.

[55] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures, England 1918–51* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 10.

caused neither the eisteddfod nor the musical life of chapels to slip into terminal decline. Rather, different music cultures ran in parallel: the musical practices that had emerged in the nineteenth century; an increasing awareness of the European classical tradition; and the multifaceted forms of popular music. It would be a serious mistake, however, to assume that individuals or any social segments aligned themselves to just one of those options.

The first Welsh musician to attain truly global celebrity was Ivor Novello (1893–1951). Born in Cardiff, he spent little time in Wales after his childhood, but took advantage of the changing age in which he lived to create a metropolitan and transatlantic musical life. Novello, like so many others, benefited from new media that were developing exponentially. The BBC's output from Wales from the time it started in 1923 included eisteddfodau and hymn-singing programmes based on the cymanfa ganu format, but its most popular radio programme in the middle of the century was *Welsh Rarebit*, which was broadcast throughout the UK on Saturday evenings. The producer from 1941 was Mai Jones (1899–1960), one of the most brilliant Welsh musicians of her generation, and the composer of the perennial hit 'We'll Keep a Welcome in the Hillside'. The success of *Welsh Rarebit* was founded on her understanding of how popular music and its reception had changed. She had spent years playing and travelling with London dance bands and had a rounded outlook. She based her productions on the clever, multifaceted formatting of nationwide US radio shows.

Postwar Wales benefited from a new level of professionalisation in the music industry. The BBC Welsh Orchestra, originally formed as a small light-music orchestra, was eventually expanded to a symphony orchestra with a new name: the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. The Welsh National Opera, which had originated as a part-time company using a largely amateur chorus, became full-time and professional in the 1970s. By 2009 both organisations had purpose-built venues in the Welsh capital. In the same period the first recognisable school of Welsh art music composers emerged, including Grace Williams, William Mathias and Alun Hoddinott.

Equally important were developments in popular music. A new breed of popular music stars emerged in the 1960s, including Tom Jones and Shirley Bassey, who exceeded the level of celebrity enjoyed by Ivor Novello. It could be argued that the most interesting and original developments came in the late 1980s and 1990s with pop groups such as Catatonia, Stereophonics, The Manic Street Preachers, Super Furry

Animals and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci; some using the English language, some Welsh, some bilingual. Each band was commercially successful – some in the Anglo-American market – but they were all distinctive, Welsh and original, so much so that their collective endeavour made theirs the first 'school' of Welsh music to be given a name: 'Cŵl Cymru'. The question of whether the label is meaningful or just convenient could hardly be more interesting. Here, too, the answer lies in both musical content and wider contextual factors.