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### **Music in the blood & Poetry in the soul? National identity in the life and music of Grace Williams**

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**MUSIC IN THE BLOOD**  
**&**  
**POETRY IN THE SOUL?**

National identity in the life and  
music of Grace Williams

Graeme James Cotterill

Submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Wales, Bangor

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The Appendix, a catalogue of Grace Williams's compositions, is supplied as a separate volume.

Further volumes of this PhD comprise the present writer's scholarly editions of Williams's

*Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon*

*Gogonedawg Arglwydd*

*Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*

*Ballads*

*Castell Caernarfon*

*Missa Cambrensis*

# ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to determine the relevance of the term 'Welsh composer' to the life and music of Grace Williams (1906-77). It first examines her relationship with the various institutions that have shaped the cultural life of Wales during the twentieth century, questioning particularly whether either party was able to exploit the resources of the other for their own and/or the wider Welsh people's benefit. The Welsh Region of the BBC is discussed in particular detail, but the impact of the policies and practices of Wales's Arts Council, National Eisteddfod, institutions of higher education, and performing artists upon Williams's output are also analysed. The second half of the thesis proceeds to examine those of Williams's works openly identified by their composer as having been influenced by her Welsh heritage: those that include native folk melodies (*Hen Walia*, 1930; *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*, 1940); depict landscape and history (*Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon*, 1939; *Symphonic Impressions*, 1943); set Welsh texts (*Gogonedawg Arglwydd*, 1939; *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*, 1962); use poetic structures (*Penillion*, 1955; *Ballads*, 1968); or have no acknowledged programme beyond their Welsh-inflected title (*Castell Caernarfon*, 1969; *Missa Cambrensis*, 1971). Where otherwise unavailable, a compact history of the composition of each work is supplied (see also the prefaces to the accompanying scholarly editions), but this latter portion of the thesis prioritises musical concerns ahead of matters historical. To conclude, Williams's reception history amongst British and Welsh critics and audiences is examined for evidence that her nationality influenced not only how she composed, and for whom, but how she was widely perceived.

The thesis is explicitly designed to be read alongside the present writer's scholarly editions of *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon*, *Gogonedawg Arglwydd*, *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*, *Ballads*, *Castell Caernarfon* and *Missa Cambrensis* (submitted alongside it and fulfilling the requirements of the PhD degree). The text itself, therefore, includes very few musical examples, pointing instead to the relevant bar references. The Appendix to the thesis comprises a catalogue of Williams's extant works, updating and correcting those previously prepared by the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and by Malcolm Boyd in his *Grace Williams* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980). Further material relating to Williams can be found in the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007).

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(for her unfailing love, patient understanding, and plentiful cups of tea)

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## A: Archival documentation

Throughout this thesis, the following abbreviations are used to cite archival sources:

BBC WAC:	BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham
BBC WRC:	BBC Wales Record Centre, Llandaff
BPF:	Britten-Pears Foundation, Aldeburgh
BUA:	Bangor University Archives
NA:	National Archives, Kew
NLW:	National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
V&A/AAD:	V&A Archives (Archive of Art and Design), London
WMIC:	Welsh Music Information Centre, Cardiff

Items within the archives are always given full catalogue citations where available, with the exception of the BBC Written Archives Centre, where not all correspondence files have been allocated specific reference numbers. Each BBC WAC file is, therefore, referred to by a single capital letter in italic type as follows:

<i>A</i>	WA1/61/1 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1934-1937\File 1a)
<i>B</i>	WA1/61/2 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1938-1941\File 1b)
<i>C</i>	WA1/61/3 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1942-1948\File 1c)
<i>D</i>	WA1/61/4 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1949-1953\File 1d)
<i>E</i>	WA1/61/5 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1954-1956\File 1e)
<i>F</i>	M25/1124 (Birmingham Composers\Williams, Grace\File 1\1950-1951)
<i>G</i>	WA10/250/1 (Artists\Grace Williams\1956-69)
<i>H</i>	(Central RCONT1\Grace Williams\Music Composer\File 1a\1939-1949)
<i>I</i>	(RCONT1\Grace Williams\Composer\File 1B\1950-1962)
<i>J</i>	(RCONT12\Central Registry (Langham)\Grace Williams\Composer\II 1963-67)
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<i>P</i>	(RCONT12\Grace Williams\Music Copyist\File II 1963-67)
<i>Q</i>	(RCONT1\Talks\Williams, Grace\1946-1962\File 1)
<i>R</i>	(RCONT12\Grace Williams\Contributors\Speaker\File II 1963-1967)
<i>S</i>	WA8/262/1 (Welsh Region Talks Pre 1970\Williams, Grace\1948-1968)
<i>T</i>	WA20/223/1 (Welsh Radio Copyright\Williams, Grace\File 1\1942-1950)
<i>U</i>	WA20/223/2 (Welsh Radio Copyright\Williams, Grace\File 2\1951-1954)
<i>V</i>	WA20/223/3 (Miss Grace Williams\File 3 1955-64\Copyright)
<i>W</i>	R27/515 (Music General\Welsh Music\1940-1949\File 1)
<i>X</i>	R27/637/1 (Music Reports\Grace Williams)

## **B: Correspondence**

When citing correspondence, no distinction is made between postcards, handwritten letters, or (in the case of BBC WAC and NA sources) carbon copies of typed letters: all are referenced in the form '[sender], letter to [recipient]' and the location of the surviving document noted. When a reference to a letter is followed by a date without further comment, it always refers to the precise date of composition: if none such is available, or merely a date of posting or receipt, this is specifically indicated.

## **C: Grace Williams scores**

In the main body text of the thesis, titles of compositions by Grace Williams are always set in italic type unless they use a generic title, hence *Symphonic Impressions* and *Suite for Nine Instruments* but Symphony No. 2 and Violin Concerto. No distinction is made in typeface between works that are published and those that remain in manuscript, neither are details of publication or otherwise noted in footnotes. The Appendix, however (supplied as a separate volume), gives full details of all surviving works, including the location of manuscript sources and dates and houses of publication when relevant. Bar number references for *Symphonic Impressions* and Symphony No. 2 refer to the present writer's published editions of the works; any other locations so cited should be referenced against the companion editions supplied with this thesis.

# INTRODUCTION

If the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* represents a suitable template from which to draw conclusions, a composer's nationality is of secondary importance only to their name and precise location and date of birth and death. In the case of the entry for Grace Williams, the relevant phrase 'Welsh composer' is, in the broadest possible terms, an indisputably accurate summary for a musician who was brought up and spent thirty years of her creative life working in the country of her birth and death. (The intervening years, 1926-47, were spent studying and teaching in London and Vienna.) Its brevity, however, also masks the fact that it impacted heavily upon the compositional career that she followed for more than fifty years. The mere matter of the location of her birth and upbringing would affect the individuals and institutions promoting, requesting and inspiring her music, and the subject matter of the scores produced as a result.

The first two chapters of this thesis consider the impact of selected, uniquely Welsh bodies on Williams's life, examining how such relationships were established and maintained and the considerable consequences thereof for her compositional output. Of these, the unparalleled length and significance of the relationship between her and the regional branches of the BBC can be chronicled in such depth that Chapter II is wholly devoted to it.<sup>1</sup> Chapter I concentrates instead upon discussing the interaction between Williams and Wales's smaller, if no less important artistic and cultural organisations: its National Eisteddfod, Arts Council and institutions of higher education amongst them. Chapters III and IV chronicle Williams's evolving attempts to musically interpret her national heritage through a gradual movement away from folk song quotation and quasi-pictorial inspiration towards innovations apparently sufficiently significant to justify the statement that she 'brought to the concert hall *for the first time* [emphasis added] a distinctively Welsh musical language'.<sup>2</sup> This second part of the thesis explores the scores the composer herself defined in title or other description as being inspired by aspects of Welsh life, briefly questioning the extent to which they can be set apart from her other works and assessing any apparent evolution in depictive techniques.<sup>3</sup>

The concluding chapter of the thesis addresses a further question that lies behind the whole work: whether being of Welsh stock not only directly influenced Williams's career development (Chapters I-II) and themes portrayed in her music (Chapters III-IV) but also indirectly impacted upon her assessment by others. Evidence of any such bias, whether acknowledged or otherwise, would suggest that the relevance of one's nationality to the appraisal of one's music is far greater than many would openly admit. This is, naturally, an issue pertinent to this thesis also – but every care has been taken not only to be conscious of the overtones that inevitably arise when nationalistic descriptors are encountered but to neutralise their effect upon the reader.

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- 1 It might also be noted that a further reason for this demarcation is the survival of such a vast amount of primary source material (over a thousand letters held at BBC WAC alone, for example) relating to Williams's contact with the BBC in Wales: a record not comparable to any of the other institutions surveyed here.
  - 2 Malcolm Boyd, *Grace Williams* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), p. 84. No attempt is made to engage with the notion that Williams's music could be in itself, in some inherent manner, 'Welsh'; rather, the present writer has confined the discussion to any compositional techniques of wholly unquestionable national origin.
  - 3 The scholarly editions that accompany this thesis comprise the most significant six of these works not to have previously been published.



To be born in Wales, not with silver spoon in mouth  
But with music in your blood  
And with poetry in your soul  
Is a privilege indeed.



Brian Harris

from 'In Passing' (Part I: Youth)

1981

## Chapter I

# COLLECTIVE CULTURE

Grace Williams and the institutions of Welsh cultural heritage

'I've still got faith in Wales – when it isn't running festivals +  
Eisteddfods .... what's underneath has such potentialities.'

(Grace Williams to Daniel Jones, 1950)



The long history of the United Kingdom's division into four regions of distinct 'national' characters, with varying degrees of administrative independence, has created a state whose component institutions often hold greater allegiance to regional identity than London-centred power. Though constitutionally bound to England since 1543, Wales has maintained a series of institutions for the identification, development and promotion of its own culture with far more wide-ranging impact than English regions with whose population it bears no comparison. Though rarely government-led, a succession of public service-orientated bodies thus held considerable influence over the development of the arts in Wales, and it would naturally have been in the interests of any Welsh composer to establish as many constructive relationships as possible. Grace Williams was no exception, and there was hardly an institution of musical clout with whom she would not correspond throughout her fifty years of residence in Barry and twenty-one years of physical separation from her homeland.

### **Academia: Creativity and Restriction**

When considering her options for further musical development upon leaving the Barry County School for Girls in 1923, Williams had a theoretical choice of three Welsh universities at which to study: Bangor, with Evan Thomas (E.T.) Davies; Aberystwyth, with Walford Davies; or Cardiff, with David Evans.<sup>1</sup> Her choice, however, was dictated not by nationality but by far more local concerns related to contemporary social norms; as she recalled: 'I tried for music scholarships at Cardiff University (no one ever suggested I should go elsewhere).'<sup>2</sup> Whilst never suggesting an alternative destination, Williams's reminiscences of having 'wasted three precious years' at University College, Cardiff (UCC) are overwhelmingly negative.<sup>3</sup> Particular venom was reserved for the composition element of the 'sterile [and] academic B.Mus'<sup>4</sup> course and the consequent feeling of being 'in shackles ... – hearing contemporary music but not being allowed to write it.'<sup>5</sup> So allegedly restrictive and exam-focussed was the course, in fact, that Williams attributed technical failings in her early work to the psychological need to rebel

1 For biographical material and reminiscences relating to the professors at Bangor and Aberystwyth, see (various contributors) 'In Memoriam E.T. Davies', *Welsh Music*, III:6 (Spring 1970), pp. 2-10; H.C. Colles, *Walford Davies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); and David Ian Allsobrook, *Music for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992).

2 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). The titles and terms of the scholarships for which Williams applied cannot be ascertained. For simplicity of reference, the three Welsh universities are referred to throughout the present study by the common (if informal) term 'University College, [location]' used throughout much of the twentieth century regardless of its absolute accuracy.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 June 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams recorded: 'When I was a university student I'd have marched in any procession that rebelled against the ... course of those days.'

5 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1959 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, CC6/1/2).



against teaching so 'completely barren of anything which I had taken music to be'.<sup>6</sup> The sole compliment she reserved for Evans's contribution to her musical education was his recognition that she possessed as genuine a creative talent as Morfydd Llwyn Owen: the gifted composer and pianist whom he had taught over a decade earlier.<sup>7</sup> Leaving Wales for postgraduate study could be considered to be as much an active rejection of the facilities and teaching it had supplied her with as a realisation that the Royal College of Music was simply the most suitable institution in which to further her career.<sup>8</sup>

If the training Williams had received in Cardiff during the 1920s focussed on academic rigour largely at the expense of creative thought, she would come to believe in a wider trend that continued on into the middle of the twentieth century. Both she and Mansel Thomas (with whom she had established a working relationship at the BBC) applied for lectureships during the 1940s: he for the headship at Bangor in 1943 and she for an assistant lectureship in Cardiff in 1945.<sup>9</sup> In each case, Williams attributed their lack of success to a Welsh establishment rooted in an adherence to conservative values, opining that '[a]cademicism has been the curse of Welsh music for years'.<sup>10</sup> For herself, she was not despondent: the question 'would they let you make it a thrilling job?' being a significant concern.<sup>11</sup> Her eventual appointment to a part-time position at the Cardiff College of Music and Drama (CCMD) in 1950 began with only one composition pupil, but she was granted the freedom to fulfil her desire to 'make students feel alive about music' rather than smother their talent with more formal instruction.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, even a full twenty-five years after leaving, she considered the still 'stifling' UCC regime to be grossly unsuitable for a composer as capable as Alun Hoddinott; then working towards his

6 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). As an example of the department's conservative teaching of composition, she attributed the following quote – in response to her writing 'anything beyond a dominant 13<sup>th</sup> – to David Evans: 'My dear child, you'll never pass your exam. if you write chords like that.' (*Ibid.*)

7 A.J. Heward Rees and Grace Williams, 'Views and Revisions', *Welsh Music*, V:4 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 7-18. This late acknowledgement of Evans's role was not present in Williams's 1940 account, which omits any mention of the involvement of any member of staff at UCC; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392).

8 Having previously tried and failed to gain an open scholarship to study at the RCM, Williams was only able to afford to attend because her Cardiff scholarship had been extended.

9 Williams held little hope of being appointed 'because University Councils usually like lots of decorations + I have nothing beyond a humble B.Mus'; see her letter to Idris Lewis, [undated] October 1945 (BBC WAC, C). For a discussion of Williams's strengthening relationship with Thomas and the wider BBC Welsh Region, see Chapter II of the present work.

10 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] July 1943 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). The Cardiff position was taken by a Major [?] Bruce, with Williams not even making the shortlist; D.E. Parry Williams, with whom Williams had studied at UCC, succeeded E.T. Davies at Bangor.

11 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 26 December 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

12 *Ibid.* Williams's pupil was John Stuart Williams, later better known as a critic and poet. Very little is known of this contribution to the CCMD – whether, for example, she made significant alterations to the teaching of composition – perhaps because of the severely limited hours and semi-independent nature of her post.

MMus but allegedly having 'all temperament + imagination [knocked] out of him'.<sup>13</sup> Having evidently enjoyed the experience of holding the only formal position in education she would ever hold within Wales, she left the CCMD within a few years perhaps only because of the pressure the increasing success of her own works brought to her composing commitments.<sup>14</sup> At all times, however, Williams's prime concern was a perceived incompatibility between the worlds of professional (and especially senior) academia and inspired composition. Whilst never openly identifying it as a reason behind her own subsequent avoidance of seeking a university post, she believed that the output of Mansel Thomas and William Mathias would have suffered had either been appointed Director of Music at Bangor at the first opportunity.<sup>15</sup>

After neither considering the University Colleges of Bangor and Aberystwyth for her own continuing education nor ever expressing any interest in moving to either location to teach, Williams still maintained direct contact with both institutions and knew D.E. Parry Williams, William Mathias (both at Bangor) and Ian Parrott (at Aberystwyth) relatively well.<sup>16</sup> By 1964, when asked for advice on behalf of a prospective student, Williams responded: 'Bill Mathias at Bangor every time',<sup>17</sup> having already identified him as 'a most gifted musician + very promising composer'.<sup>18</sup> Whilst doubtless genuine statements of admiration, these remarks are should be interpreted in the light of Williams's complete lack of respect for Parrott as 'the most brazen opportunist .... a frightful composer'<sup>19</sup> and 'the laughing stock of musical Wales'.<sup>20</sup> Neither man, nor Hoddinott in Cardiff, seems to have encouraged his college to sponsor commissions

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13 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 2 April 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1415). Williams implored Jones to join her on the teaching staff and create a genuine school for composition in Wales, but to no avail; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1410). She could not have known that Hoddinott would shortly himself be appointed lecturer at CCMD, nor that he would become Professor of Music at UCC within two decades (1967). The somewhat fractious later relationship between the two composers is evident in her referring to UCC as 'the School of Hoddinott .... Structures without steel – or even mortar'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

14 Malcolm Boyd, *Grace Williams* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp. 36-37. No doubt due to the informality of her employment, no precise date for Williams leaving the CCMD can be identified; it must, however, have been during 1953-54.

15 See her letters to Enid Parry, [undated] July 1943 and 30 April 1967 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

16 Williams's principal informant on Welsh university life, however, remained Enid Parry (*née* Picton Davies), whose husband Thomas ('Tom') had been Professor of Welsh at Bangor until 1953 and would subsequently become Librarian of the National Library of Wales and Principal of University College, Aberystwyth. Over two hundred items of correspondence between the Parrys and Williams survive, compared with none between Williams and Parry Williams or Parrott; letters to Mathias remain with the Mathias estate save for one of 5 September 1974 (NLW, 'William Mathias 2: Personal Papers', 129).

17 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 6 November 1964 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

18 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 April 1964 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

19 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 6 February 1956 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

20 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 11 December 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1473).

from Williams, and only *Carol Nadolig* (1955; composed for the choir of Aberdare Hall, UCC) can be directly linked to any of the Welsh universities.<sup>21</sup> It should be acknowledged, however, that both Mathias and Hoddinott personally directed the festivals for which *Ave Maris Stella* (St Asaph, 1973) and *Carmina Avium* (Cardiff Festival of Contemporary Music, 1967) were commissioned; both festivals maintaining close ties with their respective colleges.

Of the final academic institution relating to music in Wales – the University of Wales Press (UWP) – Williams found little positive to declare. Despite her initial reservations concerning Oxford University Press's Welsh Committee – she complained that, regardless of budgetary limitations, 'they always seem to be able to afford to publish their own things' – OUP's publications of Williams's works would come to far outnumber those of the Welsh institution.<sup>22</sup> It seems unlikely that she had any concerted contact with UWP until 1957 when, after some years, she gave up waiting for a positive response to her submission of four Welsh folk song settings and submitted them to OUP instead, who promptly accepted and published them.<sup>23</sup> Although four UWP publications had been achieved by 1962-63, matters had clearly not improved dramatically in the intervening years. Standards of proof-reading and musical literacy were so low that the fifth and most substantial work UWP would publish – the series of part-songs for women's voices *All Seasons shall be Sweet* (1959) – was twice listed in their music catalogue as an opera and a work for mixed choir.<sup>24</sup> Williams's final known contact, however, probably came in 1965 with her submission of *Benedicite* after its rejection by OUP on the grounds of poor sales forecasts.<sup>25</sup> By this point, she had become disillusioned not only with their lack of musical expertise but their supposed inability to effectively advocate the works of their published composers: 'they don't promote their publications – + don't advertise. They really don't deserve their percentage of royalties'. Indeed, it can speculatively be suggested that this date also marked the point at which Williams stopped actively seeking any

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21 UCB's Seiriol Singers (and their director, John Hywel) also premiered and subsequently recorded a new arrangement of *Carol Nadolig* for SATB choir, piano and viola; for details, see the Appendix of the present work.

22 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Picton Davies [Parry], [undated] October 1932 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Excluding folk song and other arrangements, OUP published eight of Williams's works, compared to only three by UWP; including those categories, the figures become seventeen to five respectively (see Appendix for full publication details).

23 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 15 December 1957 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams had set 'Y Fwyalchen', 'Hun Gwenllian', 'Y Deryn Pur' and 'Bwlch Llanberis'.

24 This mistake and others resulted in Williams's condemning the UWP staff as 'quite unmusical', adding 'They don't seem to have a clue'; see her letters to Enid Parry, *ibid.* and 17 October 1962 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

25 It cannot in fact be determined whether Williams definitely submitted *Benedicite* to UWP: surviving evidence only confirms that she was considering it.

further publications of her works.<sup>26</sup>

### **Yr Eisteddfod: Cultural Defenders or Definers?**

The Victorian popularisation of ancient eisteddfodic traditions in the form of an annual, national event was firmly established by the time Grace Williams was first able to engage with it. As a schoolgirl of thirteen, she entered perhaps her only Eisteddfod as a competitor in any competition: winning joint second prize in a folk song category at Corwen in 1919.<sup>27</sup> The following year's festivities, however, probably had a far greater impact when the Eisteddfod came to Williams's home town of Barry and her father, William Matthew (W.M.) Williams, became a key figure as Music Secretary in the successful organisation of an 'epoch-making' event.<sup>28</sup> If Heward Rees's assertion that W.M. Williams brought the London Symphony Orchestra to Barry to perform Stravinsky's suite from *The Firebird* against Walford Davies's wishes is correct, his commitment to contemporary music must have been a key factor in the young Grace Williams's musical development.<sup>29</sup> She would later refer to 'the wonders of *our* Eisteddfod' [emphasis added]: a sense of completely embracing the festival's artistic ideals in a manner that would not be repeated until her own involvement in planning for an Eisteddfod upon its return to Barry in 1968.<sup>30</sup>

It seems unlikely that Williams had any further engagement with the Eisteddfod during the 1920s, for much of which she was in any case concentrating on her studies in Cardiff and London.<sup>31</sup> Significantly more surprising is the realisation that her most significant and

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26 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 8 December 1965 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Only *Ave Maris Stella* (in 1975 and by OUP) achieved publication by any formal publishing house between 1963 (*All Seasons shall be Sweet*) and Williams's death.

27 See her radio script for 'Composer's Workshop', broadcast 19 October 1960, printed in full in A.J. Heward Rees (ed.), 'Grace Williams: A Self Portrait', *Welsh Music*, VIII:5 (Spring 1987), pp. 7-16. As far as can be determined, Williams never entered any Eisteddfod competition after this date, even for composition. Throughout this chapter, all references to 'the Eisteddfod' relate to the National Eisteddfod unless explicitly stated otherwise.

28 David Ian Allsobrook, *Music for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992), pp. 79-82. Allsobrook also highlights W.M. Williams's achievement in training seven hundred voices for the Eisteddfod's first Children's Concert.

29 A.J. Heward Rees, 'Obituary: Grace Mary Williams (1906-1977)', *Welsh Music*, V:6 (Summer 1977), pp. 80-81. A contemporary review, in contrast, credits the LSO's engagement and the general modernising of the Eisteddfod's musical offering to David Evans, soon to be Grace Williams's tutor; see Alfred Kalisch, 'The Royal National Eisteddfod', *The Musical Times*, LXI:931 (1 September 1920), pp. 622-625. (Kalisch's statement that 'this was the first time that the composer's arrangement for a small orchestra was used' is incorrect; it having been premiered by Ernest Ansermet over a year previously.)

30 Grace Williams, radio script for 'Composer's Workshop', *op. cit.* Williams denied, however, that it was the 1920 Eisteddfod that sparked her desire to be a composer, instead attributing that to her formal school music training. (*Ibid.*)

31 Given that no correspondence between Williams and Eisteddfod organisers seems to have survived from any period, it is impossible to be completely certain that no contact or performances took place.

sustained contact with the festival occurred during the following decade: a period she spent almost exclusively living and working in London and during which her full-time teaching work permitted her only intermittent time for composition. The 1930s yielded four orchestral performances, three world premieres, a test piece for women's voices and a short folk song recital.<sup>32</sup> *Hen Walia* (1930), the earliest of Williams's surviving orchestral works, was given its first performance at the Bangor Eisteddfod on 6 August 1931 by no less than the London Symphony Orchestra under E.T. Davies.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, although Boyd cautions that 'one must presume the destruction of a number of prentice works for orchestra', there is no guarantee that any of them had been performed and one might consider this concert to be a further breakthrough in that regard.<sup>34</sup> The inclusion of *Hen Walia* in the evening concert series even warranted a mention in *The Times*'s preview, which credited the Eisteddfod's organisers with having 'striven for originality and a fresh outlook in music'.<sup>35</sup> Its live broadcast to the whole United Kingdom undoubtedly represented Williams's largest audience to date and its reception in the concert hall and critical press was largely positive.<sup>36</sup> The following year's first (and probably only) performance of *Suite for Orchestra* (1932) was also given by the LSO on 5 August at Port Talbot; once again, it was broadcast nationwide and received plaudits from Vaughan Williams and members of the press.<sup>37</sup>

After 1932, there followed a hiatus of three years before Williams's next collaboration with the Eisteddfod – her third and final LSO concert – in Caernarfon on 8 August 1935, in which W. Matthews Williams conducted her *Concert Overture* (c1932). The reasons for this break are unclear, and it is impossible to independently verify Williams's assertion that 'the Committee

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32 Margaret Rees (soprano and frequent performer of Williams's work during the 1930s and 1940s) and Ceredig Williams performed Williams's settings of 'Ffarwel i Langyfelach', 'Jim Cro' and 'St Athan' at the Fishguard Eisteddfod, 6 August 1936.

33 Also included in the programme was Vaughan Williams's *Benedicite*: an event that Williams perhaps subconsciously recalled when selecting the same text (albeit in a different version) for her first Eisteddfod commission in 1964.

34 Malcolm Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

35 Anon., 'Welsh National Eisteddfod: Bards at Bangor again after 16 years', *The Times*, 3 August 1931, p. 18. Whether the Eisteddfod had approached Williams – still studying in Vienna – to compose a new work for them or if she herself had made the approach cannot be ascertained, though the latter is perhaps more likely.

36 'Derbyniodd ... "Hen Walia," fanllef o gymeradwyaeth yn y Gyngerdd, a hithau encôr brwdfrydig' (excerpt from a cutting of an unidentifiable newspaper; WMIC, uncatalogued); Miss Williams already shows surprising aptitude for composition and for orchestral scoring' (anon., 'The National Eisteddfod: The Music', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1931, p. 7). The *Guardian* correspondent qualified their praise by continuing '... but she needs to prune her style in order that crudities of expression can be smoothed into more vital and purposeful accents; and only hard study will enable her to attain the art of developing her music logically.'

37 Williams was told that 'Uncle Ralph ... thought it was the best thing you had done'; see William LeFanu, letter to Grace Williams, 23 August 1932 (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, M1). The *Guardian*'s critic opined that the *Suite* 'is rather raw-boned, but it is a decided advance on [*Hen Walia*]'; see anon., "'Pictorial" Music Too Freely Chosen', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1932, p. 2.

[for the 1934 Eisteddfod at Neath] ... have a downer on me'.<sup>38</sup> Enid Picton Davies (later Parry) seems also during this period to have begun urging Williams not only to seek the professional performances of the evening concerts but to consider submitting her works as potential test pieces for the numerous competitions contested annually: a suggestion Williams did not take up until 1938-39 (see below).<sup>39</sup> Unlike her first Eisteddfod appearances, none of Williams's works to be programmed in the second half of the 1930s attracted much media interest, despite the composer herself conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra (at Cardiff on 5 August 1938) in the premiere of her *Variations: Breuddwyd Dafydd Rhys* (c1934).<sup>40</sup> This world of BBC broadcasting was swiftly reaching a wider audience for Williams's work than the annual Eisteddfod could ever have been: a prime cause, no doubt, of the absence of any further original works in Eisteddfod programmes for a further nine years.<sup>41</sup>

The 1930s closed, however, with the first of three Eisteddfodau during Williams's lifetime to feature her work as a test piece; accounts of whose performance made national newspapers despite the main news being the refusal to award the literary Chair.<sup>42</sup> This arrangement of the traditional carol 'Mari Lwyd' for the relatively prestigious women's choral competition did not represent the scope of Williams's true ambitions, however. Months before the festival took place, she approached Enid Parry with a request for something rather more original than a folk song setting:

Can you tell me of any good Welsh words for an unaccompanied S.A.T.B. setting? I'd like to write something suitable for the Chief Choral Competition – or for the big Eisteddfod Choir. – for the latter I could have orchestral accompaniment!<sup>43</sup>

That the resultant work, *Gogonedawg Arglwydd* (1939), was not to feature at the planned 1940 Eisteddfod in Bridgend was no result of the response to 'Mari Lwyd': indeed, it is likely that Williams did not submit her score before the outbreak of World War II and the festivities' eventual conversion to a radio-only event. With wartime conditions significantly restricting music's role, Williams's contributed nothing further to the Eisteddfod until the first true post-

38 Grace Williams, letter to Sam Jones, [undated] July 1934 (BBC WAC, A). William Reed, the LSO's leader for both the 1931 and 1932 Eisteddfodau, seems to have admired Williams's work to the extent of offering to conduct the *Concert Overture* were it to be included in the 1934 season. (*Ibid.*)

39 Only Williams's response survives; see her letter to Enid Picton Davies [Parry], [undated] October 1932 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

40 This is the only occasion since Williams's student days for which she can positively be identified as a concert conductor either of her own work or anyone else's.

41 Williams explicitly acknowledged this change of emphasis in her letter to Idris Lewis, [received] 21 May 1938 (BBC WAC, A): 'As you know, an Eisteddfod programme means far more if it is broadcast.'

42 See anon., 'Music at the Eisteddfod', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 August 1939, p. 3 and anon., 'Eisteddfod Surprise: No Award in Chair Competition', *The Times*, 11 August 1939, p. 7.

43 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] May 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

war festival (at Mountain Ash) in 1946 where, for the first time, she adjudicated for the composition competition.<sup>44</sup>

By far the most significant event of the 1940s was the Eisteddfod's invitation to Williams to submit a score to be considered for a concert performance at Colwyn Bay in 1947; a request resulting in the selection of two of her *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon* (1939).<sup>45</sup> What could have been a continuation of a relationship broken only by the war, however, became the event that fractured it for over a decade. After first failing to agree with the Eisteddfod Committee on which movements from *Rhiannon* were to be played,<sup>46</sup> Williams's opinion of the attitude of Basil Cameron (conductor) and performance consequently given led her to vow 'No more Eisteddfods for me' and recall:

a dreadful experience indeed .... never have I met any musician as unsympathetic + callous as Basil Cameron .... the real stuff of music never gets near him .... [He] quite obviously hadn't any interest in my score .... The whole of the opening section of Movement 2 was dreadful – yet he seemed to think it would do – for Wales.<sup>47</sup>

Although Williams held Cameron personally responsible for his supposedly unmusical interpretation, she also considered that the Eisteddfod itself needed holding to account for its continued administrative shortcomings. Rehearsal time had been a major difficulty even in the 1930s, in part because the 'concerts always dragged on for at least 4 hrs + the morning's rehearsal was only 3 hrs',<sup>48</sup> but this challenge was evidently still faced by composers during the following decade and led Williams to remark that Daniel Jones 'managed to pull off what I had taken to be the impossible – a good show at an Eisteddfod concert.'<sup>49</sup> Nor were rehearsals the only frustration: the Eisteddfod's maladministration of due payments left Williams waiting

44 Williams adjudicated alongside D.E. Parry Williams, with Enid Parry providing the necessary translations; see her letters to Enid Parry, [undated] June 1946 and 1 January 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued) and notes regarding the administration of payment below.

45 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 1 January 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams subsequently endeavoured to persuade the Eisteddfod to premiere an excerpt from *Symphonic Impressions* instead, but to no avail; see her letter to Enid Parry, 13 June 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

46 Cameron's acquiescence to Williams's choice of the first and second movements (ahead of his initial selection of the third and second) evidently came too late for the printing of the Eisteddfod programme; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [postmark] 29 July 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

47 This particular section was cut from the evening performance (on 7 August, by the combined BBC Welsh and Northern Orchestras) at Williams's insistence; see her letter to Enid Parry, 29 August 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). No recordings or independent accounts of the concert are known to survive to verify these comments. Williams's ill-feeling had not worn off a decade later when she heard that Cameron ('dreadful old man') would conduct *Penillion* at her first BBC Prom; see her letter to Enid Parry, 29 June 1958 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

48 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). At Colwyn Bay, Williams claimed to have received only ten minutes of rehearsal time between 12:50 and 13:00; see her letter to Enid Parry, 29 August 1947 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

49 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] August 1948 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1402). Excerpts from Jones's Symphony No. 1 had recently been performed at the Bridgend Eisteddfod.

months for recompense regarding her 1946 adjudication and similar delays were repeated in 1949-50 (regarding her help in selecting test pieces) and 1964 (for photographing chorus scores of *Benedicite*).<sup>50</sup>

The 1940s closed, however, with Williams mooting an idea based on the Eisteddfod's position as a potential funding body. Unfortunately for her, the notion that they might consider sponsoring her soon-to-be-written Violin Concerto without insisting on rights to a first performance was soon dispelled by Enid Parry, who informed her that the Eisteddfod Council had little money to spare for such projects.<sup>51</sup> Williams's sole Eisteddfod-related tasks of the 1950s, in fact, comprised adjudicating the composition competitions for 1952 (Aberystwyth) and 1958 (Ebbw Vale).<sup>52</sup> Adjudication, like script-writing and assessing for the BBC, brought her much-needed income, but she restricted herself strictly to the composition category: the only musical discipline which she felt provided her with 'time to consider + reconsider + write + rewrite'.<sup>53</sup> In 1959, the organisers of the 1960 Cardiff Eisteddfod offered Williams a 'commission' for a twenty-minute orchestral work but included no fee in the terms,<sup>54</sup> leading to her rejection of the offer in favour of beginning work on *The Parlour*.<sup>55</sup>

Williams's first interaction with the Eisteddfod of the 1960s themselves, however, came with a further offer of a commission for a thirty-minute work for girls' voices and accompanying orchestra of school pupils to be performed at Newtown in 1965. On this occasion, some financial recompense was available, though Williams still fought to raise the proffered fee of one hundred pounds (for the equivalent of several months' work) by a further fifty.<sup>56</sup>

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50 Grace Williams, letters to Enid Parry, 1 January 1947; 8 October 1949 and 6 November 1964 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). To elicit money from the National Eisteddfod Council, Williams once resorted to telling them 'they were downright dishonest + if all people treated me as they did I'd starve'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 14 April 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1416).

51 Grace Williams, letters to Enid Parry, 8 and [postmark] 14 October 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). As the wife of a prominent Welsh literary figure and herself an adjudicator at the 1950 Eisteddfod in Caerphilly, Parry was well positioned to make informed judgements on the state of the festival's finances.

52 Grace Williams, letters to Enid Parry, [undated] 1952 and 29 June 1958 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams also permitted the Eisteddfod to use Parry's translation of 'To the Wild Hills' (from *The Dancers*) as a test piece in 1955.

53 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 18 April 1968 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). She had turned down offers of performance adjudication at both the Ystradgynlais National and Llangollen International Eisteddfodau of 1954; see her letters to Enid Parry, 23 and [postmark] 26 April 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

54 Despite 'spending the earth on orchestra, conductor etc. etc.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 30 July 1959 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

55 The financial implications of the choice are evident in her comment: 'alas I c[oul]d never afford to do it – + in any case if I do anything at all next year [1960] it will have to be the opera'. (*Ibid.*)

56 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 December 1963 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).



Accordingly, Williams spent the summer of 1964 composing her *Benedicite* (in collaboration with Enid Parry, who translated the text into the required Welsh) whilst ensuring that the Eisteddfod Committee were made fully aware of her professional dissatisfaction.<sup>57</sup> Its premiere on 3 August 1965 likely represents its sole performance during Williams's lifetime and since: a fulfilment of her belief that a Welsh work for schoolchildren was hardly likely to appeal to many other performers and bring further income as a result.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suggest that had *Benedicite* not been a greater success in the minds of its commissioners, Williams might not have been as willingly embraced into the planning routines for the Eisteddfod inextricably linked with her: that held at Barry in 1968.<sup>59</sup>

As Barry's most famous musical resident, and regardless of her limited knowledge of Welsh, Williams could hardly have been excluded from the preparatory work necessary for the Eisteddfod's return to her home town.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the Eisteddfod organisers were doubtless aware of W.M. Williams's prominent role in the Barry Eisteddfod of 1920, and would likely have considered it only fitting that his daughter be granted the same privilege. By December 1966, she had helped select the test pieces for the musical competitions and turned down the offer of a new commission, citing the impending (though soon unfulfilled) BBC offer of an opera for television.<sup>61</sup> In terms of programming for the Eisteddfod concert series, Williams's prime concern was to benefit young and/or Welsh composers, but the organising Committee were so concerned with the potential audience attendance and reaction that her suggestions were initially rebuffed.<sup>62</sup> Regarding her own commission, however, the same colleagues

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57 Having noted that the 1964 Eisteddfod had made a profit of £30,000 yet paid Daniel Jones only £100 for his Symphony No. 6 – a fee that Williams considered 'wouldn't satisfy a dock labourer for one month's work' – she wrote to the Eisteddfod in her capacity as Member of Council for the Composers' Guild; see her letters to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 11 and 15 August 1964 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1475 and AA1476).

58 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 December 1963 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The performance was given by the Montgomery Secondary Schools' Choir and Orchestra, conducted by Alan Paynes.

59 During the three years separating the two events, Williams adjudicated the composition competition at Aberavon in 1966; probably doing so for the final time.

60 Williams does not seem ever to have been given any specific organising role, instead acting more as an informal advisor. No reasons are ever noted for this, though in addition to the obvious language barrier one might speculatively suggest that she felt unable to serve in any official capacity whilst also being offered commissions.

61 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 December 1966 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

62 The Committee rather were more influenced by Charles Groves, to whom Williams wrote: 'Thank you for asking the Committee to include a Welsh work in each programme. It needed you to say that. I had suggested a complete programme of Welsh works. They stared blankly at me – then someone said "Well; if you want an empty Pavillion ...". Then I tried for a morning concert of young composers' works. No go. But I managed to persuade them to include Fire Bird – though there were murmurs of "What about audience reaction?" In 1920 ... there were no such difficulties.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Charles Groves, 27 June 1968 (NLW, Sir Charles Groves Papers, A3/3).

eventually persuaded her to reconsider, and she spent much of the following year searching for a suitable subject matter without giving her final acceptance until October 1967.<sup>63</sup> After settling on a four-movement suite for orchestra, the composition of *Ballads* was completed by April 1968, with Williams 'suddenly gaining some confidence' about the work's potential.<sup>64</sup> By July, however, much of her prior disillusionment with the Eisteddfod and the 'minimum rehearsal' time she associated with it had returned.<sup>65</sup> So discouraged was she, upon hearing the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's initial play-through, that she urged Charles Groves to withdraw it altogether:

Until now I've felt that there was nothing for it but to hope for a miracle on Saturday afternoon [at rehearsal] – but it has just dawned on me (why on earth I didn't think about it before I don't know) that if the miracle doesn't happen you could scrap the whole thing + play something else which the orchestra knows backwards – that perhaps would be fairer to the audience .... I think this last commission will prove to me it's time for me to pack up. So sorry!<sup>66</sup>

Whether the RLPO's concert performance was successful or otherwise depends on whether Williams's own reaction or that of the critical press is considered to supply the more accurate account of events. Although many of the work's technical difficulties had been overcome between rehearsal and concert, Williams considered *Ballads* the 'one flop of the Eist[eddfod] and devoid of 'hwyl + conviction':<sup>67</sup> a description not necessarily wholly contradicting Kenneth Loveland's interpretation of the event as 'a conscientious first performance'.<sup>68</sup> That she felt able to draw any positives from the whole experience was more dependant on her involvement with the festival as a whole, which she at least acknowledged to have been 'a big success – very rewarding after all our plans.'<sup>69</sup>

Given such an in-depth participation in the 1968 festivities, and her relatively advanced age, it is perhaps hardly surprising that Williams had little further contact with the Eisteddfod during her remaining years.<sup>70</sup> The connections made with the RLPO proved fruitful, however, when

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63 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

64 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark illegible] May 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

65 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 July 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Apart from a run-through on the day of performance, *Ballads* had only its share of a three-hour rehearsal – including two other major works by Mathias and Daniel Jones – a week beforehand.

66 Grace Williams, letter to Charles Groves, 5 August 1968 (NLW, Sir Charles Groves Papers, A3/1).

67 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 31 August 1968 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

68 Kenneth Loveland, 'Grace Williams's new suite', *The Times*, 12 August 1968, p. 5.

69 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark illegible] August 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams's *Fantasia* was also programmed in 1968 (on 7 August) by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales; see p. 18 below.

70 *Ballads* was not, in fact, the Eisteddfod's final contribution to Williams's creative output, but details of the circumstances of their commissioning of *Cân Gwraig y Pysgotwr* in 1969 have proved impossible to locate.

they programmed both *Penillion* (in 1969) and *Ballads* (1970) in their own concert seasons soon afterwards and took *Castell Caernarfon* to the Ammanford Eisteddfod of 1970: arguably the most significant period of programming of her works by a non-Welsh orchestra since World War II. This late blossoming, however, does not disguise the fact that, during her forty-year relationship with the festival, she had major concerns not merely regarding any administrative deficiencies but the extent to which their natural ideological positions differed. Considering the Eisteddfod's unique position as a celebration of Welsh life and culture reaching tens of thousands of people annually, Williams felt that above all it continued to fail to fulfil its artistic and influential potential. Within months of the release of the first ever commercial recording of her music, for example, she felt able to confidently state that one man – the record producer Gethin Pugh – had 'done more for Welsh composers in this short time than the Nat. Eisteddfod Council have ever done.'<sup>71</sup> This, like her comment of twenty years later that the Eisteddfod had programmed 'so many indifferent works', should not be considered a criticism of any one event: rather, it expresses a general disappointment with a perceived lack of ambition to advance native composition.<sup>72</sup> Still more generally, she considered the organisers to be inward-looking and possessing of an attitude of self-absorption peculiar to Wales (and especially, by implication, Welsh-speaking Wales):

I've still got faith in Wales – when it isn't running festivals + Eisteddfods. If only we could tear away the veil of smugness – what's underneath has such potentialities.<sup>73</sup>

Whether empirically true or otherwise, and regardless of upon whose shoulders should fall any blame, this evidence clearly paints a picture of mutual partial exclusion to the detriment of both parties.

Finally, it is impossible to complete any account of Williams's relationship with Eisteddfodau without recounting her undeniable vitriol for those of the Urdd Gobaith Cymru. She and the Urdd had very little to do with each other throughout her composing life save for the Urdd's one-off commission of a Welsh setting of Psalm 150 to mark its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1947: a lack of contact no doubt caused by a distinct lack of rapport.<sup>74</sup> Williams wholeheartedly

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71 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams's lack of involvement with the Eisteddfod during the 1940s – except for the supposedly disastrous performance of *Rhiannon* in 1947 – no doubt coloured these views.

72 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark illegible] August 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

73 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 14 April 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1416). Given that this letter comprises a tirade at most of the Welsh musical institutions active at the time, Williams's comments on 'smugness' could be considered a more general critique than one aimed solely at the Eisteddfod.

74 Almost nothing is known about the nature of the *Salm 150* commission, perhaps because its publication seems

condemned the Urdd's contribution to the musical life of Wales's young people in her two surviving accounts of its Eisteddfodau:

I hope music was better at this year's [1954] Urdd Eisteddfod than it was last year. I heard + saw the T.V. programme of last year's winners + it was so dreadful it made me angry – + full of despair – if this is a League for preserving Welsh culture then why does it make a travesty of it? There were horrible, common action songs with heavy footed bumpkins trying to emulate London chorus girls ... + the singing was flat + they sang rubbishy Welsh music. (which of course wasn't really Welsh at all – except for the words.) .... perhaps things are better this year ... but if they had some more of those action songs I hope you damned them unmercifully!<sup>75</sup>

I listened ... to this year's [1957] Urdd broadcast. So different from last year's T.V. that it might be coming from a different country! Lovely voices – though again those wretched Eisteddfod soloists' tricks – false appoggiaturas [*sic.*] + tremolos in the girls' solos ... thank goodness there were no gob-stoppers in the throat this time .... Really I don't know where I am in connection with youth singing in Wales .... if only Eisteddfodau would ban those awful vocal mannerisms which one hears only in Eisteddfodau. They have won too many prizes in the past[,] that's the trouble .... Choose good music, Enid, whenever you get the chance – it's bound to inspire them in the end. School cupboards all over Wales are crammed with Novello's drivel (+ distortions of the classics.) + what Welsh works there are are 90% bad. ~~Your~~ Translations (like the Bach) are a godsend to the Urdd when the music is beautiful.<sup>76</sup>

Of particular note is Williams's concern not only for the standards of performance, but for the damage she believed was being done to the children's broader understanding of music and context. Though harshly uncompromising in their nature, these descriptions each represent a characteristic demonstration of her insistence upon absolute integrity ahead of any other, perhaps more popular or competitively successful, attempt at musical interpretation. Indeed, one might speculate that the competitive nature of Eisteddfodau created a barrier between Williams and the Eisteddfod (Urdd or otherwise) far more substantial than one of mere language familiarity.

### **Performers: Local Champions**

If Wales's festivals, societies and funding bodies provided the physical and financial means that enabled almost all of Grace Williams's works to be premiered in Wales during her lifetime, the performers themselves often had a unique input into the works with which they were associated. Of these, this section of the present work concerns itself with the two performing institutions beyond the BBC with which she had considerable contact: the National Youth Orchestra of Wales (NYOW) and Welsh National Opera (WNO).<sup>77</sup> The NYOW, in particular,

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not to have inspired any performances: although printed in the Urdd's celebratory book, the work seems never to have been made available separately at sheet music; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 12 June 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued) and Evan D. Jones (ed.), *Y Llinyn Arian* (Lerpwl/Liverpool: Gwasg y Brython, 1947), pp. 2-5.

75 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 12 June 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

76 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 1 March 1957 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

77 Williams's relationship with the various incarnations of the BBC Welsh Orchestra is discussed in detail in

forged a significant partnership with Williams between its formation in 1946 and the effective dismissal of its founder, Irwyn Walters, in 1957/8.<sup>78</sup> Williams had first come across Walters in 1939, when he had approached her as musical director of the Swansea Festival Orchestra in search of new material for his coming season, but she seems to have had little to do with the NYOW itself until 1952 and their performance of *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* under Clarence Raybould.<sup>79</sup> In each of the following three years, however – culminating in the commission and premiere of *Penillion* in 1955 – the orchestra would perform one of her works: a consistency probably afforded to no other Welsh composer since. Even if further supporting evidence is lacking, this level of commitment suggests that she, Walters and (to a lesser extent) Raybould briefly enjoyed a period of mutual trust and support.<sup>80</sup>

It is no longer possible to know exactly what inspired the commissioning of a new work from Williams's pen in 1955, only that Walters – who, having secured the opportunity for the NYOW to perform at the Edinburgh International Festival, 'drove straight away to Barry' – must have been personally involved and that she 'readily agreed'.<sup>81</sup> Williams, though hardly concerned about composing music that would appeal to young people after her previous experience at the BBC, initially found it difficult to pitch her writing to reflect the technical competence of the players.<sup>82</sup> The prime motive for her concern was undoubtedly the struggle that the orchestra had previously had to overcome in performing the quicksilver and rhythmically demanding Scherzo from *Symphonic Impressions* in 1954:

[The NYOW] has several raw recruits this year + I'm afraid they'll make my scherzo sound as though it were written by a madwoman! But, bless them, they like it + go around whistling + humming it. It is marked *Allegro barbaro e segreto* + I realise now that the 'barbaro' should be reserved for professionals! Their concert tour starts tonight, + I have to be brave + go to their second concert (in Cardiff) tomorrow. The rehearsals were very worth while – but hearing it in the

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Chapter II of the present work. She also maintained personal contact with many more Welsh ensembles and individuals as performers and commissioners of her works than can be discussed here: Ann Griffiths (*Hiraeth, Cân Ramantus* and *Songs of Sleep*, amongst others), Osian Ellis (*Two Ninth-Century Welsh Poems*) and the Penarth Ladies Choir (*The Dancers, Three* [Shakespearean] *Lyrics*) being but three notable examples.

78 The first fifty years of the NYOW are chronicled in Beryl Bowen James and David Ian Allsobrook, *First in the World: The story of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), whilst their sixtieth anniversary tour in 2006 included Williams's *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*.

79 The dissolution of the Swansea Festival Orchestra with the outbreak of war ultimately prevented any collaboration; see James and Allsobrook, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

80 James and Allsobrook (*op. cit.*, pp. 61-62) note the performances of *Fantasia* and *Sea Sketches* in 1952 and 1953 respectively but fail to mention that the NYOW had also performed the Scherzo from *Symphonic Impressions* in 1954.

81 James and Allsobrook, *op. cit.*, p. 45. The archives of the NYOW that might prove matters, and even confirm whose idea was the composition of an orchestral *penillion*, remain with the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) in Cardiff and are not available for public consultation.

82 *The Merry Minstrel* and *Seven Scenes for Young Listeners* both pre-date *Penillion*, dating from 1949 and 1954 respectively.

middle of a concert programme in presence of an audience doesn't bear thinking about!<sup>83</sup>

This experience was clearly weighing on Williams's mind during the period between the completion of *Penillion* on 7 April and its summer premiere;<sup>84</sup> fears she expressed to Daniel Jones whilst still acknowledging her admiration for the young players' skill:

Next week I have to go to Bangor for my rehearsals with the Youth Orchestra. Am rather dreading it; excellent though they are I think perhaps I've made it too stiff this time. They'll get off to an easy start but *Penillion* Nos. 2 + 4 are full of hurdles!<sup>85</sup>

Contemporary accounts of the NYOW's performance, however, imply that her fears were unjustified and, most unusually, there is no sign in her correspondence of any critical post-premiere analysis.<sup>86</sup>

If *Penillion* cannot in terms of stature alone be considered one of Williams's most significant works, its position as the 'work that more than any other signals the beginning of a new phase in [her] artistic development' would permit one to have hoped for further such successful collaborations between its composer and the NYOW.<sup>87</sup> That it did not immediately generate these can, in the first instance, be attributed to the orchestra's natural wish to diversify its repertoire and support other Welsh composers after four successive years of programming Williams's works.<sup>88</sup> Far more significant in the long term, however, was the acrimonious dismissal of Walters from his post in 1957: an action that Williams considered to be entirely unwarranted and blamed almost entirely on Raybould's supposed desire for greater artistic control.<sup>89</sup> When Raybould approached her to provide a work for the 1958 season soon after the reorganisation had been made public, she felt morally obliged to refuse and did so with some

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83 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 31 July 1954 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). It is notable that Williams's concern for absolute performance standards is hardly couched in the same terms as it would have been for a professional ensemble.

84 James and Allsobrook (*op. cit.*, p. 45) state that it was premiered at Usher Hall, Edinburgh, on 3 September 1955; this is incorrect, for the NYOW had performed it during their usual summer concert series, beginning on 30 July at Llangefni.

85 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 19 July 1955 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1428).

86 Neville Cardus, for example, wrote of the NYOW that '[n]ot once did the critical listener have to make allowances. If the orchestra had been heard behind closed doors by someone unaware that young people were making music, he might have hesitated to say whether this or that professional orchestra were in action'; quoted (source not supplied) in James and Allsobrook, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

87 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 38. Williams's originality in adapting Welsh traditional *penillion* for an orchestral context is not in doubt, and is discussed elsewhere in this thesis (see Chapter IV).

88 1956 and 1957 saw commissions from Daniel Jones (*Ieuencid*) and David Wynne (*Fantasia for Orchestra*) respectively.

89 'C.R. gave [the WJEC] the opportunity to do a Krushev [*sic.*] + they grasped it'; see Grace Williams, letters to Irwyn Walters, 16 and 17 April 1958 (private collection: Gareth Walters, uncatalogued). This deeply controversial event, documented in limited detail by James and Allsobrook (*op. cit.*, pp. 52-56; including a quotation from a letter from Grace Williams to the *South Wales Evening Post*), still resonates today in the reluctance of the WJEC to discuss the matter openly.

venom: 'I wrote back + said that after the way [Walters] had been treated I had no wish to associate myself with [Raybould] or the W.J.E.C. this year or any other year.'<sup>90</sup> Williams, whilst regretting that she could no longer work with the young people, never composed another work for the orchestra or granted them permission to perform any of her scores not otherwise in the public domain.<sup>91</sup> Even after nearly twenty years had passed, she still felt strongly enough to claim to have 'no regrets at having taken that stand. One either turns a deaf ear or speaks up against injustice.'<sup>92</sup>

If the retirement of Raybould in 1966 somewhat eased the difficulties between Williams and the NYOW, his replacement, Arthur Davison, understandably felt little obligation to rebuild the relationship.<sup>93</sup> Instead, he soon sought to recruit younger composers to the orchestra's cause – a policy Williams approved of in principle – by devising a competition, but returned to Williams when it failed to yield a suitable result. She described the affair to Elizabeth Maconchy:

[I]sn't it sad, the Nat. Youth Orch of Wales offered a prize for a work by a young Welsh composer – under 30 – for this year's season. A few were sent in + not one was suitable – so they rang me up + said they were doing my *Fantasia*. I said “No, surely you can find a young composer” – + mentioned several names – but not one of them had submitted anything – evidently they regard themselves as too avant-garde for the N.Y.O.W. – an orch. of their own contemporaries. There's something awfully wrong.<sup>94</sup>

The successful re-introduction of *Fantasia* into the orchestra's repertoire, however, including a performance at the 1968 Eisteddfod, led to the second spectacularly successful collaboration between orchestra and composer – even if Williams probably had little to do with its planning. The NYOW's 1969 recording of the work, amongst scores by other Welsh and European composers, proved commercially extremely successful. Although this was the second time *Fantasia* had been committed to vinyl, the NYOW's disc surely far outsold its predecessor: within barely a year of release, sales had exceeded twenty thousand.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the age of

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90 Grace Williams, letter to Irwyn Walters, 16 April 1958 (private collection: Gareth Walters, uncatalogued).

91 Williams's personal loyalty to Walters was evidently beyond doubt for, in 1963, his Franco-Welsh Orchestra performed selections from *Seven Scenes for Young Listeners*: the same work that she had deliberately avoided bringing to Raybould's attention in 1958; see her letter to Irwyn Walters, 17 April 1958 (private collection: Gareth Walters, uncatalogued).

92 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 February 1976 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

93 Williams blamed the WJEC, rather than Davison himself, for her continued exclusion from the NYOW's repertoire; see *ibid.*

94 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 June 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

95 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 6 October 1970 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1502). *Fantasia* was coupled with 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau' (arr. David Wynne) and music by Walton, Jeremiah Clarke, Berlioz and Hoddinott (*Welsh Dances*, Suite No. 2) as Music for Pleasure SMFP2129. For full citation details and those of the previous recording of *Fantasia* by Mansel Thomas, see the Appendix to the present work.

the musicians did not detract from the professional nature of the record release, which earned critical acclaim<sup>96</sup> and rare unqualified praise from the composer, who considered their performance to have been 'truly marvellous'.<sup>97</sup>

Although, by chance, both the NYOW and WNO gave their first performances in 1946, it is hardly surprising that Williams should have come to write for the former several years before any involvement with the latter.<sup>98</sup> She had twice previously considered undertaking an opera based on a famous Welshman – Twm o'r Nant (Thomas Edwards) or Dic Penderyn (Richard Lewis) – and once a 'folk opera' after Jaromír Weinberger's *Švanda dudák* ('Schwanda the Bagpiper'), but had never truly progressed further than a draft libretto because of the overriding priority to 'earn some pennies'.<sup>99</sup> Without the guarantee of considerable financial support, the composition of an opera was a practical impossibility, regardless of the availability of a locally-based opera company to stage her work. Suitable conditions were put in place, however, in Daniel Jones's proposal to the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain that he and Williams each be commissioned to write a one-act opera for performance by WNO as a double bill.<sup>100</sup> The terms of the resultant commissions, however, evidently did not guarantee WNO performances, with Williams presuming that their lack of immediate acceptance by the company upon completion rendered their prospects for staging bleak indeed.<sup>101</sup> The possible

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96 '[D]eftly done .... great accomplishment and a pleasure to listen to'; see Trevor Harvey, review of SMFP2129, *Gramophone*, XLVII:555 (August 1969), p. 40.

97 'You'd never believe they were amateurs'; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 March 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

98 A full history of the first forty years of WNO, including a brief passage on *The Parlour* (pp. 107-108), can be found in Richard Fawkes, *Welsh National Opera* (London: Julia MacRae, 1986). Williams did offer to play a part in the fledgling WNO during the company's earliest days in 1946, later recalling: '[I] only wish I'd forced my way in ... when all the local piano + singing teachers were jumping on the bandwagon – but Bill [Smith; Business Manager] refused my offer – rather curtly.'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 10 May 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1488).

99 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams approached the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain with her idea based on Dic Penderyn but was unsuccessful in her attempt to gain their support. (*Ibid.*) The Twm o'r Nant and 'folk opera' subject matters were first mooted long before WNO's establishment; Williams observing in her letter to Idris Lewis, 30 November 1939 (BBC WAC, B): 'I know Wales hasn't got a National Opera, but, since the majority of singers at Sadler's Wells are Welsh ... I don't see why a short opera on a Welsh subject shouldn't be taken on.' For background to the latter proto-idea – with which *Hen Walia* is associated – see Chapter III of the present work and Grace Williams, letter to the editor, *Y Cerddor*, I:20 ([published] October 1931), p. 338.

100 The twin opera commissions caused some controversy when Robert Smith, in a contribution to *The Composer* (magazine of the Composers' Guild), seemed to imply that Williams and Jones had profited unscrupulously from their membership of an Arts Council Music Sub-committee. For this, and Williams's editorially (and probably considerably) shortened rebuttal, see *The Composer*, 8 (Autumn 1961), pp. 26-28; *The Composer*, 9 (Spring 1962), p. 46-47; and letters from Grace Williams to Daniel Jones, October-December 1961 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive).

101 It seems unlikely that Williams ever made any serious attempt to approach other opera companies; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] January 1962 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued): 'I have not the slightest hope of a performance .... [postscript] My only hope ... is the Welsh National Opera'. Jones successfully oversaw the performance of his *The Knife* at Sadler's Wells in 1963.



reasons for this decision are various, and include the recognition that *The Knife* and *The Parlour* combined lasted rather longer (with a respectable interval, upwards of three hours) than most evenings of opera and the undoubted difficulty of the writing in both works for the amateur chorus.<sup>102</sup> Likely chief amongst them, however, was the relative conservatism of WNO's programming, summarised by Fawkes as a 'repertory [that] had been firmly rooted in works from the past, almost entirely composed in the previous century.'<sup>103</sup> Williams's contemporary description of the company as having 'no interest in living composers' is no doubt unfair – especially given the recent performances of Arwel Hughes's *Menna* and *Serch yw'r Doctor* – but her belief that, in order to get *The Parlour* performed, she would have to 'break through the barricades of W.N.O.C.' was perhaps not wholly without foundation.<sup>104</sup>

Even if WNO were proving intransigent, it seems unlikely that Williams made any considerable effort to market her opera to them until a chance meeting with John Moody, their Director of Productions, in December 1963.<sup>105</sup> Her formal submission of the score, however, was initially unsuccessful: a failure that Williams attributed to a business policy that required playing to full houses and which led to her wondering 'whether they'll do [*The Parlour* and *The Knife*] in our lifetime'.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, this improvement in the company's awareness of her work must have contributed to *The Parlour*'s acceptance in August-September 1965 as an opera for the following season, premiering on 5 May 1966.<sup>107</sup> In the intervening period, their primary contribution to the work was to all but require Williams to change its title from 'En Famille' (the title of Guy de Maupassant's story on which she had based her own libretto) to one believed more likely to court Welsh audiences and enable 'good box-office'.<sup>108</sup> During its seventeen-month run, however, she established a firm rapport with the company's administrative staff and

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102 Fawkes, who had access to all WNO's confidential archive material, notes that 'their pairing had seemed impractical' (*op. cit.*, pp. 107-108); see also Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark illegible] July 1964 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1474).

103 Fawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

104 Grace Williams, letters to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] January 1962 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued) and Daniel Jones, [postmark] 6 December 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1472).

105 This meeting is recounted in Williams's letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 11 December 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1473), in which she acknowledges that WNO's music staff had never seen the score.

106 Grace Williams, letters to Daniel Jones, [postmark illegible] July 1964 and 24 May 1965 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1474 and AA1479). The 'full house' policy was primarily that of William Henry (Bill) Smith, the company's Business Manager since 1948, and was primarily responsible for the conservative nature of the programming referred to above.

107 No concrete reason for WNO's change of heart seems to have been given, Williams recalling: 'It has all happened so suddenly, without any warning + all out of the blue that I can hardly take it in. It seems they are expanding + have more resources – all very mysterious because it isn't so very long since they said it was impossible'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] September 1965 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1477).

108 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] September 1965 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1477). For examples of the many other English titles briefly considered by Williams, see *ibid.* and her letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 7 October 1965 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1480).

especially its amateur chorus, to whom, after the premiere, she had written:

Thank you, thank you one + all for your lovely singing in The Parlour – + for your friendliness + enthusiasm. I know only too well that the choruses are full of hidden perils – + even for a professional chorus they wouldn't be easy. Well, you won through – so all praise to you + to your chorus master. If you hadn't succeeded the performance wouldn't have been possible .... it's still true that the best South Walianians are able to face a challenge. Diolch yn fawr iawn i chi gyd!<sup>109</sup>

Despite generally positive reviews, the removal of *The Parlour* from the WNO repertory after 1967 was not any great surprise.<sup>110</sup> By the 1966 autumn season it was already evident that it was not proving popular with audiences, despite continuing to be billed with Puccini's relatively well known *Il Tabarro*. Fawkes summarised the problem by noting that the 'patriotism that had drawn full houses for Geraint Evans [(during the first season to feature him performing with his 'home' opera company)] did not extend as far as trying an opera by a Welsh composer' and recording that its audience figures were 'by far the lowest of the season.'<sup>111</sup> Williams had been aware from the outset that the production of *The Parlour* might be only of limited interest – fearing that poor ticket sales might '[put] paid to all Welsh opera for some time to come'<sup>112</sup> – but was distraught to hear that it had been a 'financial catastrophe'.<sup>113</sup> *The Parlour*, however, was surely unfortunate to have had its premiere delayed until a financial climate at WNO that necessitated their concentrating 'on 100% pops [i.e. popular hall-fillers] to pay for new premises and expansion'.<sup>114</sup>

Any prospects for *The Parlour's* revival were further dented by the Welsh Arts Council's decree

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109 Grace Williams, letter to the WNO chorus, 10 May 1966 (NLW, C1987/7 Welsh National Opera Company, GF/C89). The opera's cast had been very supportive throughout and, after its final performance in Cardiff on 27 September 1967, some were 'quite militant when they heard it was packing up for good'; see Williams's letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

110 For reviews of the premiere, compare the following: Alun Hoddinott, 'The Parlour Triumphs', *Western Mail*, 6 May 1966, p. 7; anon., 'Naturalness of new Welsh opera', *The Times*, 6 May 1966, p. 18; Peter Heyworth., 'Revelations on the rostrum' [N.B. this title does not refer to *The Parlour*, which appears under the sub-heading 'Craftsmanlike'], *Observer*, 15 May 1966, p. 25. The *Times* review is the more positive of the two papers with UK-wide circulation: 'one particularly admires ... the naturalness of the dialogue and (for the most part) the expertise of its timing .... The music's actual idiom is conservative; but its aptness to situation, and its very considerable wit, justify it.'

111 Fawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

112 A year in advance of the event itself, Williams's prophesied *The Parlour's* demise: 'I'm afraid these will have to be the final performances because bookings are so bad ... I can't blame anyone. They have the choice between Mozart, ... Smetana, Donizetti, Rossini – + me, + not even Puccini as bait can draw them in + can one really wonder?'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 6 October 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

113 'It was shattering + made me feel very guilty + ashamed somehow.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] October 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams credited the 'financial catastrophe' designation to a public admission by Douglas Craig, WNO's General Administrator.

114 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark] 1 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). 1964-69 marked a period of considerable upheaval at WNO that included their near closure, the professionalising of the chorus and the retirement of Bill Smith; see Fawkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-135.

to WNO 'to cut out double bills in future';<sup>115</sup> whilst Williams had little hope of its successful transfer to the London stage with Bryan Balkwill on the grounds that 'no one would come – all the avant-garde would be out for his blood ± it isn't good enough.'<sup>116</sup> Despite this negativity, however, two final events relating to the work are worthy of mention as a footnote to any discussion of the relationship between Williams and WNO. Firstly, although it had not been financially successful, *The Parlour's* artistic merits were deemed admirable enough for two significant institutions to request a further opera: the BBC and, later, WNO themselves, who were considering including a new work in their forthcoming touring programme, 'Opera for All'.<sup>117</sup> Though neither proposal came to fruition, their existence is testament to the fact that the company evidently presented *The Parlour* in a manner capable enough to demonstrate Williams's dramatic gifts. Secondly, David Sutton – WNO's chorusmaster during the 1966-67 performances – was the architect of the opera's revival for a short run in St Mary Abbott's Theatre given by Mary Hill's Abbey Opera during 3-6 April 1974: its London premiere and the only repeat performance given during Williams's lifetime.<sup>118</sup>

### **Facilitators: Councils, Committees and the Crown**

The BBC was undoubtedly the most important institution in Wales whose policies and funding contributed directly to Williams's composing career. Indeed, this extent of this relationship was such that, when further combined with the BBC's role as a host of performers, it warrants a separate chapter within the present work to discuss its activities. Other, smaller institutions, however, played comparable roles as facilitators of performers: bodies who, whilst not themselves performing her works, incentivised others to do so. Whilst the various incarnations

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115 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] August 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

116 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Balkwill had conducted the WNO and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in *The Parlour's* premiere at Cardiff's New Theatre in 1966, and resigned as the company's Musical Director shortly before the autumn season in 1967 (see Fawkes, *op. cit.*, p. 117).

117 Only the briefest of mentions of the latter survives in Williams's personal correspondence; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 18 December 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). According to material in the NLW (C1987/7 Welsh National Opera Company, GF/C89), her last formal contact with the WNO seems to have been in January 1968. The BBC concluded that *The Parlour* was 'too long for T.V. + not suited to the small screen ... they said they'd prefer me to write a new [opera] specifically for Television'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 6 October 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). The proposal remained viable for over a year, and was abandoned only when Williams and Cedric Messina (producer) could not agree upon a suitable subject for the plot.

118 In a greatly reduced orchestration for piano duet, harp and percussion, *The Parlour* played alongside Milhaud's *Trois Opéras-minutes* instead of *Il Tabarro*. Two further semi-professional productions of *The Parlour* have taken place since Williams's death: in 1991, with a small orchestra under the baton of composer and critic Hugo Cole (25-26 August, Shawford Mill Theatre, Bath); and 1993, when its traditional Puccini coupling was restored (7-9 July, orchestra and soloists of the Welsh College of Music and Drama conducted by John Pryce-Jones, Sherman Theatre, Cardiff). It has never returned to the WNO fold.

of the Arts Council of Wales provided the most long-term support, Williams was, at times, also required to maintain relationships with smaller groups whose *raison d'être* centred on encouraging artists to study and perform Welsh music.<sup>119</sup> Of these, the first to impact upon her work was the Welsh Folk Song Society (WFSS), with its long-time secretary W.S. Gwynn Williams and his Cwmni Cyhoeddi Gwynn being considered in the same fold.<sup>120</sup>

It is impossible to know when Williams and Gwynn Williams first met or when each became aware of the existence, talents and operations of the other. By 1937, however, when Gwynn Williams sought the support of Welsh composers in founding Cwmni Cyhoeddi Gwynn, Williams clearly believed that she knew him well enough to comment sarcastically on his business practices. In considering his company only as a last resort for publication of her arrangements of Welsh oxen songs, for example, she remarked to Tom Parry that 'dear Mr. Gwynn Williams ... might consent to offer us a shilling a piece for them'.<sup>121</sup> By 1945, Cwmni Cyhoeddi Gwynn and the WFSS had become, in Williams's eyes, all but interchangeable, with each insisting that folk songs could be copyrighted by their collectors and their use by composers thus restricted. Williams disagreed vehemently with Gwynn Williams's notion that the tunes could be claimed in this manner; setting out her objections in full:

I've always felt that folk songs are the property of the nation – + that a collector who does little more than listen to an old crone singing a tune, + scribble it down (a matter of a few minutes) should have no right to the ownership of the tune – the tune is the nation's. Most of these collectors did it as a labour of love – or said they did – + they were all people with leisure + money – + should only be too pleased to have their finds used by composers + thus spread abroad. As things are the law is on their side + their attitude is “You shan't touch our tunes without our special permission + you must pay us our full share of performing fees[.]” ... I have dared to use tunes without permission – in my Fantasia – + so far have not been hauled over the coals – but I may be at any moment. Vaughan Williams is very much against the law on this point, too. He says you can get the better of it by doing your own collecting. For instance if a collector sues you + says the usual, you can always say that you have also collected that tune – all you have to do is to find an old man or woman who knew the tune in their youth – get them to sing it to you, write it down, + then the tune is as much yours as the collector's. The collections of the W.F.S.S. are hardly known outside Wales – + not too well known in Wales. Is it any wonder why?<sup>122</sup>

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119 An account of Williams's relationship with the previous incarnations of the Arts Council of Wales closes this chapter; see pp. 28-34.

120 For a full history of the Welsh Folk Song Society, see Roy Saer, *Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru: Canrif Gron* (no location given: Cymdeithas Alawon Gwerin Cymru, 2006). W.S. Gwynn Williams, secretary from 1933-57, is the subject of David R. Jones's 'W.S. Gwynn Williams: Advocate of Change and Tradition' (PhD dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2008).

121 Grace Williams, letter to Tom Parry, 11 September 1937 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Parry had, at Williams's request, written additional verses to supplement the traditional words to the folk songs published by Boosey as *Six Welsh Oxen Songs* later in 1937. Despite Williams's obvious reservations, she did permit Cwmni Cyhoeddi Gwynn to publish her arrangements of 'Mari Lwyd' and 'Cadi Ha' in 1938-39 but nothing else during her lifetime.

122 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [received] 22 February 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). There is insufficient scope within this thesis to assess the appropriateness and accuracy of Williams's analyses, but her criticisms were surely at least partially exaggerated for purposes of effect.

Great as the ideological dispute was, however, it should be viewed in conjunction with Williams's firm belief that composers had a right to be paid for their work via a percentage of royalties earned by the performer or broadcaster. Gwynn Williams preferred a system based on the total transfer of rights to the publishing company for a set fee: an operation Williams interpreted as an attempt to ensure his personal financial gain through the exploitation of others.<sup>123</sup> Their disagreements on matters of principle and practicality had become so substantial by July 1945 that Williams 'decided to wash my hands of any further dealings' with 'a most impossible person to deal with'.<sup>124</sup> Upon receiving another request for works for Cwmni Cyhoeddi Gwynn, she 'wrote [Gwynn Williams] a reply straight from the shoulder' in abject refusal.<sup>125</sup>

Williams was, however, forced to reconsider this self-imposed exile from folk song arranging when commissioned, in May 1948, to compose the score to *Blue Scar*: a newly-proposed feature film focussing on life in a Welsh mining village for which the director (Jill Craigie) required an accompaniment of mostly traditional music.<sup>126</sup> Although it is unclear whether her initial idea to feature 'Mae Nghariad i'n Fenws' actually brought her into the conflict she feared with the WFSS, there can be little doubt that she still loathed the society and its secretary, whom she condemned as the 'blot on the fair name of Wales'.<sup>127</sup> Thereafter, insofar as can be ascertained – and it should be remembered that she may never in fact have discussed *Blue Scar* with them – Williams had almost no further contact with either Gwynn Williams personally or the WFSS.<sup>128</sup> Whether this can entirely be attributed to their mutual differences is arguable for,

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123 These views are a clear subtext within her statement that Gwynn Williams 'always said that if I sold out to him + let him have all the rights of publication – + all royalties – then it would be easier for him to arrange. There was always this deadlock between us'; see her letter to Enid Parry, [received] July 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

124 *Ibid.* and Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] June 1946 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

125 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 23 November 1945 (BBC WAC, C). The BBC were, at the time, having similar difficulties with the WFSS, and even considered halting their programmes of arrangements of Welsh folk songs until the dispute could be resolved.

126 Muir Mathieson conducted the Philharmonia Orchestra in perhaps Williams's most notable film score during November-December 1948. For a full account of her time working on *Blue Scar*, see her letter to Enid Parry, 11 December 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued); for discussion of the music see elsewhere in this thesis and, especially, Jan Swynnoe, *The best years of British film music, 1935-1958* (New York: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 110-118.

127 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 20 May 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Days previously, she had written to her friend complaining that neither she nor the film company had the time or money to spend wrangling with Gwynn Williams and questioning the WFSS's supposedly altruistic motivation ('If they had any real love for their country + music I should have thought they'd have given composers every facility to use their tunes – instead of which it[']s "keep off the grass" every time'); see her letter to Enid Parry, 15 May 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

128 When searching for folk tunes to include in her music for the 1960 film *A Letter for Wales*, for example, she was unaware that Gwynn Williams had retired as secretary of the WFSS three years previously; see her letter to Enid Parry, 11 March 1960 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

as Boyd has noted, 'not a single original work written after 1954 uses a Welsh folktune'; thus, no further grantings of permission were needed.<sup>129</sup>

Given Williams's gradual movement away from folk song as a source of inspiration for her compositions, it is hardly surprising that the WFSS came to be supplanted in her priorities by another society dedicated to the establishment of a national music. The Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music (GPWM), however, would frequently come to fare equally poorly in her estimation.<sup>130</sup> Although its predecessor, the Welsh Recorded Music Society, had participated in one of the most important moments in Williams's career to date by funding the first ever commercial recording of her work, she viewed its successor with considerable suspicion.<sup>131</sup> Much as with the WFSS in earlier decades, Williams's primary concerns were ideological, and led to her emphatic refusal of the GPWM's request to join their first council on the grounds that it prejudiced due impartiality:

John Edwards [the Guild's founder] is ... a guileless idealist but rather woolly. He thinks Alun [Hoddinott] is a genius + has helped him a lot. J.E. is clever at raking in the money .... this last year £100 for Dan[iel Jones] to write Symph. No. 4 + £100 for Alun to write Symph. No. 1. They made David Wynne President last year (knowing him to be a nice chap who wouldn't interfere ...) ... + people had no idea that they were contributing to a small group who were going to help themselves to the money ... Now as I see it, if an artist has faith in himself he can but be commended (+ envied) if he has courage to say "if you will finance me, I'll write a work of which Wales will be proud." .... But it's not the same thing when one collects for oneself + pretends it's fair shares for all .... I'm not going to oppose them actively. Perhaps they are right + I'm wrong (+ stupid to have these money scruples) ... It's the old story of the end justifying the means: one either agrees to that or one doesn't.<sup>132</sup>

Given that Williams admitted to being equally as frank when replying to Edwards's invitation, it is hardly surprising that she and the GPWM proceeded to tread essentially independent paths for over a decade.<sup>133</sup>

The Guild's continuing close association with one particular composer caused Williams particular difficulty: 'from the start', she alleged that its name would be better rendered 'The

129 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 36. It should not be presumed, however, that Williams altered her musical style because of any difficulty in obtaining traditional material.

130 The GPWM was formally constituted in 1954: by coincidence the year that Williams abandoned folk song as a source for her compositions.

131 Founded by John Edwards 'for the advancement and preservation of Welsh music', the Welsh Recorded Music Society included music by Daniel Jones, John Thomas, David Vaughan Thomas and Arwel Hughes (amongst others) in its first issue of records in 1949. Amongst them was the London Symphony Orchestra's performance (spread over three sides) of *Fantasia*, conducted by Mansel Thomas (Decca AK1999-2000).

132 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 12 June 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). John Edwards ('I can admire him – + feel a bit sorry for him') and David Wynne were excepted from her personal criticisms and, given her staunch friendship with Daniel Jones, it is unlikely that she begrudged him his commission.

133 The original letter of rejection does not survive, but Williams's report that 'I told [Edwards] just what I thought' is highly unlikely to have been an exaggeration; see *ibid.*

Guild for the Promotion of Alun Hoddinott' ('though he does allow David Wynne to share the honours').<sup>134</sup> In 1961, she even briefly privately blamed Hoddinott and the GPWM for having stoked her conflict with Robert Smith (see above re. the commissioning of *The Parlour*) before subsequently retracting her claim.<sup>135</sup> Later in the decade, however, matters had evidently cooled sufficiently for Williams to accept a position as one of the Guild's many vice-presidents (in early 1963) and, in 1968, receive a commission to write a song cycle for the following year's Swansea Festival.<sup>136</sup> *The Billows of the Sea*, the resultant work for Helen Watts and the brainchild of the Guild's 'splendid new organiser who has rescued it from the doldrums', earned Williams sixty guineas as a commission fee and no doubt contributed to her renewed belief that the Guild had become a fairer and more impartial organisation.<sup>137</sup> As Williams's most substantial work for voice and piano, it also represents the Guild's conclusion that one of Wales's elder stateswomen still had significant material to contribute to contemporary music.

During 1968-69, a further commission and premiere were arranged that, whilst not being connected to a Welsh institution *per se*, could hardly be discussed in any other context. Preparations for the musical events to coincide with the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon Castle on 1 July 1969 began with a meeting of a Music Sub-committee on 14 December 1967, with Williams's name put forward as a potential contributor within three months.<sup>138</sup> When approached by the secretary to the main Investiture Committee, Williams eagerly received the offer of a commission whose broadcast would reach millions of people worldwide and whose significance and public stature were unrivalled in her career to date.<sup>139</sup>

134 'I have given [him] the benefit of many doubts – but it's no good. He is not very nice – and very disingenuous'; see Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 1 November 1960 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1422). The first known occurrence of Williams using her alternative name for the Guild occurs in her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 6 February 1956 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

135 This *volte face* occurred after her discussing the matter with Hoddinott at a chance meeting, when Williams was 'surprised to hear him rush to our [i.e. and Daniel Jones's] defence so promptly'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] October 1961 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1466).

136 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 18 December 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Despite her honorary appointment, Williams's correspondence details little regular contact with the GPWM during the 1960s and '70s beyond her occasional attendance at their annual congress and the contribution of an article, *How Welsh is Welsh Music?*, to *Welsh Music*, IV:4 (Summer 1973), pp. 7-12.

137 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 11 February 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). To whom Williams was referring cannot be determined with certainty: perhaps Gethin Williams or A.F. Leighton Thomas, both of whom had accepted committee positions in recent months.

138 All formal documentation of the Music Sub-committee of the Office for the Investiture of the Prince of Wales is held at the National Archives, Kew. Williams was recommended to be approached to write a 'Processional for orchestra' by a working party of the Music Sub-committee comprising Alun Hoddinott, Arthur Bliss, Roy Bohana, Lt. Col. B.H. Brown, Lord Dynevor [Dinefor], Geraint Evans, Arwel Hughes and Huw Wheldon (neither Benjamin Britten nor Michael Tippett, who were both invited, could attend); see report of its first meeting, 29 February 1968 (NA, BD 25/235). The report's conclusions were accepted and recorded in the minutes of the third meeting of the Music Sub-committee, 2 May 1968 (NA, BD 67/20).

139 See Robert Jones, letter to Grace Williams, 8 May 1968 and Williams's reply ('It would be a lovely thing to do: This morning I'm walking on air!'), 9 May 1968 (NA, BD 25/233). Jones's informal approach was

Although her acceptance was wholehearted, Williams's beliefs concerning the notion of royalty itself were rather less clearly delineated. In 1953, for example, she had admitted:

You wouldn't think I was almost a communist at one time – + still have leanings that way – I think it must be a streak of my grandmother cropping up in me now + again that keeps me from going over the border. (What I didn't learn about royalty from her wasn't worth knowing)<sup>140</sup>

Of the Prince of Wales himself, however – 'a nice boy' who had 'inherited the best of both parents' – she had little negative to say and, without any adherence to Welsh political nationalism, she had few ideological convictions that might have prevented her acceptance of the commission.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, she had envisaged the kind of music suitable for the Investiture even before hearing that she was to have a role to play in its composition: her hope for fanfares from the castle walls that would '[echo] to the four winds' was realised not only in the introduction to her own processional music (and that of Daniel Jones into which it segued) but in the ceremonial scores of Arthur Bliss and David Wynne.<sup>142</sup>

With such an unusually large gap between the offer of a commission and the date of its premiere, Williams completed the draft of her full score in March 1969 after solving the various difficulties of working within the very rigid time-scale of the royal procession.<sup>143</sup> A minor re-write was required when the fanfare-playing trumpeters and drummers of the Royal Military School of Music (Kneller Hall) proved incapable of performing her opening prelude, but Williams's experience as a whole was overwhelmingly positive.<sup>144</sup> She received the personal commendation of the Prince when they met on 4 July; the worldwide broadcasts of the Investiture and the film based upon it (*Draig o Dras*: 'Proud Dragon') netted her a very

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designed to ensure that there were no embarrassing rejections to the formal invitations issued by the Duke of Norfolk (and Earl Marshal) a month later; see his letter to Grace Williams, 7 June 1968 and her swiftly renewed acceptance, 8 June 1968 (NA, BD 25/233).

140 Grace Williams, letter to Lorraine Davies, [undated] 1953 (BBC WAC, D). She had also requested that her arrangement of 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' not be accredited to her when it was broadcast on the BBC Welsh Region; see her letter to Elwyn Evans, [undated] June 1953 (BBC WAC, D).

141 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 31 March 1969 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). She had met Prince Charles once previously when, in 1962, he had attended the Llandaff Festival premiere of her *Processional*; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 July 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

142 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 18 April 1968 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

143 Williams had to increase the length of her composition by a third because of an amendment to the timing and found writing music 'all in [the] same tempo – no development, no climaxes' to be a considerable challenge. The insertion of trumpet fanfares between her own music and Daniel Jones's was intended to break up the monotony, but their plan for further antiphony between orchestra and trumpeters to close the processional never materialised; see her letter to Enid Parry, 31 March 1969 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

144 Grace Williams, letter to Egon Wellesz, 18 June 1969 (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien, F13.Wellesz.1698.Mus). This simplification still proved beyond the scope of the performers: evident from the highlights of the investiture issued on Delysé SROY1, where Williams's music was cut to the prelude only. The main body of the music had, in Williams's opinion, 'sounded good ... – and made quite an impression'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 July 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).



respectable financial return; and her music, re-cast as a standalone work entitled *Castell Caernarfon*, remains one of her most tightly structured and melodically rich orchestral scores.<sup>145</sup>

As a postscript to this account of Williams's contribution to the Prince of Wales's investiture – a fee-free commission that could be considered a gift – it is fitting to note the existence of a second gift to the Prince for which she composed a new work. *Marwnad Cynddylan*, a finely crafted miniature of a mere twenty-six bars for trumpet and piano, formed part of an album of pieces presented to the Prince in 1970 by the Performing Right Society. Further information regarding this piece is frustratingly difficult to come by but, unlike *Castell Caernarfon*, its composition seems to have mattered little to Williams, who seems to have found the decision concerning her attendance at the celebratory lunch as great a challenge as the writing of the work itself:

I'm waiting for David Wynne ... to return from London before I decide what to do. His wife tells me it's just possible that he'll be able to go .... If he doesn't go then wild horses wouldn't drag me on to that high table – along among all those exalted ones all unknown to me + me to them. Ghastly!<sup>146</sup>

No discussion of the institutions within Wales that impacted on Williams's career could be complete without an account of her often fractious relationship with the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain (WC/ACGB) and its successor, the Welsh Arts Council (WAC).<sup>147</sup> Whilst doubtless fully aware of the Committee's existence during her time in London, Williams would have felt its influence much more closely after relocating to Barry in 1947 following a period of ill health.<sup>148</sup> The Festival of Britain in 1951, for which considerable responsibility had been devolved to the regional Council Committees, represented an ideal opportunity for a first major collaboration between the WC/ACGB and the Welsh composers it was in part constituted to promote. No such venture could be agreed with Williams, however, with her response to the suggested commission for a 'Festival Overture' indicating that any future relationship with the Committee could easily be soured by the circumstances in which it had begun. In a disagreeable meeting between the two parties on 6 October 1949, '[the

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145 Fees related to the BBC's coverage of the Investiture were significantly outweighed by those from overseas (£350+ from one Austrian broadcast, for example); see Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 3 November 1971 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1505) and her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 July 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued) for an account of meeting Prince Charles for a second time.

146 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 1 June 1970 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Details of the other contributions to the album are unobtainable.

147 The WC/ACGB became a near-autonomous body – a Welsh Arts Council in its own right – in 1967, by the granting of a Royal Charter, and became wholly independent in 1994 under the name 'Arts Council of Wales'.

148 See Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29 for an account of Williams's employment and movements during 1946-47.

WC/ACGB] offered me a crumb – but fortunately I wasn't hungry – + it was lovely saying no to the prize bitch [Myra Owen] who interviewed me + to that insufferable little snob + grand dictator Morgan Nicholas.<sup>149</sup> Given the highly personal nature of Williams's refusal, the Festival Committee's opposition to her selection as composer of incidental music for a further Festival commission – the film, *David* – could hardly have been unanticipated.<sup>150</sup> Potentially more significant, but similarly unsurprising, was Owen's later (1955) reluctance to endorse the conclusions of her own Music Panel in recommending the offer of a major commission to Williams to write a second symphony.<sup>151</sup> In each case, Williams's commission was only assured by the advocacy of other, more independent musicians: Mansel Thomas and Muir Mathieson in the case of *David* and D.E. Parry Williams regarding the symphony.<sup>152</sup> Hardly surprisingly, Williams's request that Owen increase the proposed fee for the latter – to more accurately reflect the Committee's expectation that a composer should produce orchestral parts as well as a full score – was initially met with a flat refusal.<sup>153</sup>

Whether there were any similar objections to the third, and most substantial, of Williams's three direct Arts Council commissions – *The Parlour*, in 1959 – remains unknown, but it is notable that the possibility of her writing an opera was raised not by Committee members but by Daniel Jones.<sup>154</sup> Neither, when *The Parlour* was eventually staged, did Williams ascribe any credit to

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149 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1410). Myra Owen was ACGB Director for Wales between 1952 and 1960, having previously (1949-52) been Acting Director. This episode, the background to it, and its subsequent impact on the WC/ACGB's commissioning of Williams's Symphony No. 2 is described in detail in the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007). Of particular note is the recognition that the fees being offered by the Committee were so low that the ACGB itself retrospectively took action to raise them; see, for example, John Denison's letter to Myra Owen, 20 January 1950 (V&A/AAD, Festival of Britain Files 1946-1957, EL/116).

150 David 'Amanwy' Rees Griffiths (1882-1953) was a coal miner, school caretaker and poet from Ammanford, who played himself in *David's* title role.

151 Owen, perhaps deliberately, mis-recalled Williams's refusal of the Festival Overture commission as an attempt to gain the more lucrative commission for a symphony that had already been offered to Daniel Jones; see minutes of the twenty-ninth meeting of the WC/ACGB, 20 January 1955 (V&A/AAD, Arts Council of Great Britain Records 1928-1997, ACGB/35/353).

152 'Muir Mathieson insisted on having me – though the Welsh Committee wanted anyone but me'; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] March 1951 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). D.E. Parry Williams, who had known Grace Williams since their student days, chaired the WC/ACGB's Music Panel who made the recommendation regarding Symphony No. 2; see minutes of the twenty-ninth meeting of the WC/ACGB, 20 January 1955 (V&A/AAD, Arts Council of Great Britain Records 1928-1997, ACGB/35/353).

153 After receiving 'a detailed statement of costs' from Williams, the Committee agreed to pay up to £100 towards part copying: an amount apparently only sufficient because Williams proceeded to charge her own labour at a sixpence less per page than her semi-professional copyist; see her letters to Daniel Jones, 12 May 1956 and 18 March 1957 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1437 and AA1445).

154 'It was Daniel Jones who first put the idea into [the WC/ACGB's] heads – he wanted to write an opera, + for some reason unknown to me included me in the proposition he put to them: 2 one-act operas, one by him + one by me.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 8 June 1959 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). No mention of this is made in Williams and Jones's own correspondence.

the WC/ACGB for having pro-actively campaigned for the production of her and Jones's works. Instead, she implied that their inactivity and lack of ambition had been partially responsible for the delay in arranging a premiere, and that their belated enthusiasm could be better described as a jumping upon the artistic band-wagon:

By the way, Roy Bohana said he'd go all out to get [WNO] to do 'The Knife['] next season. He said it's their duty to do our operas. Well, yes – but it's a bit late for him to say this. It wasn't prodding from the Arts Council that got 'The Parlour' into the repertory + W.N.O.C. have already said that if all goes well 'The Knife' will follow 'The Parlour'.<sup>155</sup>

Having already proved incapable of maintaining a constructive relationship with Myra Owen, Williams was similarly unable to do so with her effective successor as prime decision-maker regarding Williams's work: Roy Bohana, appointed in 1961 as the WC/ACGB's Music Director. This blunt 'analysis' of his character –

He is regarded everywhere now as an oracle – + he certainly possesses great power .... I still think it was a staggering appointment. He is a good organiser – but it has come to something when they await pearls of wisdom to fall from his lips .... I don't dislike him – but can't seem to like him somehow.<sup>156</sup>

– would be written four years before their personal relationship disintegrated almost completely over Bohana's conducting of her *Carmina Avium*.<sup>157</sup> His refusal to allow her to openly contribute to his final rehearsals – after she had taken the previous three at his request – led her to lose her temper and refuse to assist further, alleging in private that she had 'always disliked' him for being 'collossally [*sic.*] conceited' and, 'as a musician ... 90% fraud'.<sup>158</sup> Although her assertion that Bohana 'treated me quite unforgivably' can probably be interpreted as hyperbole, there can be little doubt that the affair damaged their relationship irrevocably.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, Williams strongly believed that Bohana's resentment would linger, with the potential to cause considerable impact on her future career. Upon returning her commission fee to the Cardiff Festival of Twentieth-Century Music, in rejection of any self-imposed moral hold over her, she opined:

I shall suffer for this[,] I know, but I'm prepared to suffer .... Dan[iel Jones] ... + several others

155 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 22 March 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1486). WNO have never, as far as can be determined, staged Jones's *The Knife*.

156 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 5 August 1964 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

157 The third of Williams's three Latin settings, 'Ploratione cygni', was omitted at the premiere, apparently because Bohana was 'quite incapable of coping' with its relatively complex time signatures; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 March 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

158 *Ibid.* Williams also had a blazing row with Alun Hoddinott regarding *Carmina Avium* (which he had commissioned for the second Cardiff Festival of Twentieth-Century Music): in response to his accusation that she had 'caused him more bother than the whole of the Festival put together' she concluded that she was wholly unwilling 'to play David to Alun's Goliath'. (*Ibid.*)

159 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 30 April 1967 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

begged me to realise what the consequences would be – though they would have done the same, I know.<sup>160</sup>

Evidentially proving any such consequences is, naturally, impossible.

Williams's seeming inability to maintain any kind of stable, constructive relationship with her potentially highly influential contacts on the WC/ACGB and WAC no doubt impacted heavily on the number of commissions she received from either body.<sup>161</sup> During the more than thirty years that both co-existed, only the three aforementioned works were directly commissioned; a rate of only one concert work (discounting *David*) per decade and a half.<sup>162</sup> It is undeniable, however, that neither *Symphony No. 2* nor *The Parlour* stood any realistic chance of composition without the financial backing that only the WC/ACGB could provide. Indeed, these commissions certainly represent two of Williams's three most substantial post-war works and, arguably, two of her most successful. Their completion allowed her to explore genres otherwise beyond her reach owing to the temporal and financial investment necessitated, and to apply the compositional skills inevitably developed over such large-scale works to more intimate scores otherwise unrelated to the WC/ACGB or WAC. Nevertheless, the impression cannot help but be given that Williams and her contacts were each partially responsible for failing to develop a relationship of mutual benefit, comparable to those of other Welsh composers of the period, through a longer series of directly commissioned scores.

The input of the WC/ACGB and WAC into Williams's career by no means, however, extended only to the field of proffering commissions; in fact, the benefits to Williams of the bodies' indirect support probably outweighed even the significance of the two major concert works. At least three further strands of such support can be identified in sponsorship: of local music festivals; of orchestral concerts and tours; and of a series of recordings. Although a detailed analysis of the first falls beyond the scale and scope of this thesis,<sup>163</sup> Williams's appreciation for

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160 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 March 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

161 Bohana's tribute to Williams in his contribution to 'Grace Williams: A Symposium' is perfectly complimentary and could be used to argue against any statements to the contrary; see *Welsh Music*, V:6 (Summer 1977), pp. 15-30.

162 *Fairest of Stars* (1973) was also a WAC commission – for a Hallé Orchestra tour of North Wales – but was funded by the BBC in Wales and is best considered in connection with the recording that was subsequently made; see below.

163 Williams's major works to have been commissioned by local bodies – with external funding or otherwise – include *Processional* and *Missa Cambrensis* (Llandaff Festival); *Ave Maris Stella* (North Wales Music Festival); and *The Lovely Gift of the Gab* (Commonwealth Festival, Cardiff). Countless other festivals, in Wales and beyond, provided first performance venues for works commissioned by others: *Symphony No. 2*, for example (Swansea Festival: WC/ACGB commission); *Harp song of the Dane women* and *Mariners' Song*

the second policy and understanding of its impact is obvious in her comments to fellow musicians. Of the 1964 concerts season in Barry, for example, featuring such performing prowess as the Hallé Orchestra and Prague Chamber Orchestra, she declared 'God bless the Arts Council';<sup>164</sup> whilst her Trumpet Concerto for the Hallé's Bram Gay was written specifically with their WC/ACGB-funded 1964 spring tour of North Wales in mind.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, she explicitly acknowledged that the WC/ACGB and WAC were instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of her works – and those of other Welsh composers – in these concerts, on occasion reputedly against the wishes of the visiting orchestra or its management. The London Symphony Orchestra, for example, stood accused of treating 'Welsh concerts like one-night stands – plays like a brilliant computer – their minds far away';<sup>166</sup> whilst Williams concluded that John Barbirolli, who 'doesn't like doing anything new these days', was 'doing the [Welsh] concerts against the grain – to please [the] Arts Council'.<sup>167</sup> Her remark that Welsh composers 'have to be grateful that Wales is a nation + not a region' should be seen as a recognition that the WC/ACGB and WAC brought innumerable benefits to Wales, regardless of any personal disagreements with their policies and their implementation.<sup>168</sup>

Most laudable of all the WAC's achievements in promoting Williams's music was the series of commercial recordings produced under its auspices during the first years of the 1970s.<sup>169</sup> Though not the first such discs released, they were the first to feature any of her music other than *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* and, consequently, the first opportunity granted to listeners to own a more representative sample of her work on record. Having presumably trialled *Sea Sketches* (in 1970) and *Penillion* in (1971-72) to ensure that a market for Williams's works existed, the WAC evidently felt sufficiently emboldened to fund her first 'solo' recording in 1973.<sup>170</sup> The stature of such a prestigious event, however, left Williams wracked with

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(St David's Festival: BBC); and *Six Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Cheltenham Festival: BBC).

164 The international line-up being praised by Williams also included the Royal and London Philharmonic Orchestras; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 13 July 1963 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

165 The Trumpet Concerto's place on the tour was probably secured with Gay's influence and had been planned before even a movement of it had been completed; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [received] 18 June 1963 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). It was premiered, under Charles Mackerras, on 8 March 1964 and remained in the Hallé's repertory for the following year's tour under John Barbirolli.

166 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] October 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams was dreading the LSO and Edward Downes's account of *Processional* but subsequently had to acknowledge a 'superb performance' and a 'lovely surprise'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 18 December 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

167 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 13 May 1965 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

168 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 16 July 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

169 Full citations of all the recordings referred to in the following passages, together with any subsequent re-issuings of the same material, can be found in the Appendix to the present work.

170 Both earlier discs received critical acclaim: the *Gramophone* reviewers (Edward Greenfield and Trevor

indecision and doubt from the outset; believing that nothing was 'good enough' to be included and that the project should be abandoned before its undertaking.<sup>171</sup> By May 1973, she could feel the pressure of the record '[looming] over me like a dark cloud',<sup>172</sup> choosing 'in desperation' to combine the recording with a previously separate commission from the BBC and WAC.<sup>173</sup>

This selection of *Fairest of Stars* had great potential for all concerned: for Williams, it enabled the placement of her most contemporary work in the public domain; for the WAC, it considerably raised the profile of its commissioned work and, by extension, that of the Council itself. Self-doubt, however, assailed Williams upon its completion, with particular concern relating to the single-composer nature of the disc: a strategy that she considered would hugely limit its potential market and led her to '[beg] them to call it off – or let me share a record as before'.<sup>174</sup> Even having spent considerable time revising several of the other featured works to ensure her own satisfaction, she still considered the whole enterprise to be 'an awful waste of public money' because of her belief that negligible sales would impact upon the prospects for future records of Welsh works.<sup>175</sup> Somewhat conversely, however, this self-pity even extended to her stating that, because of WAC sponsorship, 'Welsh composers have an unfair advantage' regarding recordings of their work.<sup>176</sup> It is no doubt fortunate that such negativity reached neither the orchestra – who gave her works 'the performances of a lifetime'<sup>177</sup> – nor the record-buying public who, no doubt informed by positive printed reviews and radio coverage, bought

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Harvey) praised Williams's *Sea Sketches* in particular for their 'individual human response' to the coastline, and recognised the originality of *Penillion* amongst its more conservative couplings (Daniel Jones's *The Country beyond the Stars* and Hoddinott's *Welsh Dances*); see reviews of Decca SXL6468 and HMV ASD2739, XLVIII:569 (October 1970), p. 72 and XLIX:587 (April 1972), p. 68.

171 Of Bohana's suggestion that Williams select Symphony No. 2 as one of the works to be recorded, for example, she wrote: 'it's got such bad bits in it + I don't think I could patch it up now'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 28 August 1972 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams dismissed the notion of recording *Missa Cambrensis* out of hand ('of course there's no possibility ...'); see her letter to Daniel Jones, 4 June 1973 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1510).

172 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 2 May 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

173 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 4 June 1973 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1510). Disregarding works already issued, Williams selected *Carillions*, the Trumpet Concerto, *Castell Caernarfon* (recorded but subsequently dropped from the record due to a lack of space) and *Fantasia* for inclusion but could not think of another representative work of suitable duration. Had the BBC not agreed to grant rights of the first performance of *Fairest of Stars* to the recording rather than their own Welsh tour (for which it had been originally commissioned), Williams suggested that Janet Price instead record her *Song of Mary* (1939); see her letter to R[?]. Walford, 3 July 1973 (BBC WAC, N).

174 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 15 August 1973 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

175 Grace Williams, letters to Elizabeth Maconchy, 28 July and [undated] August 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Amongst the most significant revisions were the addition of a new cadenza-like movement to *Carillions* to enhance its virtuosity for Anthony Camden and many changes to *Castell Caernarfon* to reflect the difference between outdoor and studio performance.

176 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 30 November 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). This letter also details some of the practical difficulties that preceded the recording sessions and provides an account of the sessions themselves.

177 *Ibid.*

her discs in their hundreds.<sup>178</sup> Both for this commercial success and the public recognition it brought her, Williams later felt drawn to repeat her call to 'God bless the Welsh Arts Council': an indication that her comments prior to and surrounding the recording were indicative more of raised stress levels than genuine objection to WAC policy.<sup>179</sup> By 1976, when plans for a further all-Williams collection were first mooted, she expressed none of the foreboding that had accompanied the 1973 release: tragically, her death in February 1977 meant that she would not see the new project fulfilled.<sup>180</sup>

### **Summary: personality, principle and practicality**

It is evident even from the relatively brief accounts provided above that Grace Williams was unable to maintain a wholly constructive long-term relationship with any of the Welsh musical institutions to which she had ready access during her lifetime. Indeed, it could be argued that the bodies praised most highly or, at best, least frequently criticised in her correspondence were those with whom the partnership was by necessity limited in timescale: the planners of the Investiture celebrations, for example, or WNO. The national organisations most obviously active throughout the majority of her career, by contrast – UWP, the National and Urdd Eisteddfodau, the management of the NYOW, and various incarnations of the GPWM and WAC – were those with whom contact was most sporadic or conflict-fuelled. Whilst, in some cases at least, there were obvious practical barriers (such as an incomplete understanding of Welsh) to any total integration, these alone can hardly explain the scale of the only surface-level engagement. Instead, the common factor to all of these relationships – Williams herself – must be considered as a prime cause of their fragmentary nature.

Williams's directness of character and refusal to compromise her self-assembled integrity represent repeated themes even within the unsurprisingly glowing public tributes paid to her after her death.<sup>181</sup> What is rarely mentioned, however, and scarcely ever beyond her work in

178 Trevor Harvey, the *Gramophone* reviewer, commented that Williams's status and expertise deserved 'a better showing in the catalogues'; see his review of HMV ASD3006, LII:618 (November 1974), p. 82. BBC Radio 3 had, in successive weeks (9, 16 and 23 November 1974), broadcast *Fantasia* and *Carillons* in 'Stereo Release' and 'Record Review'. Williams recorded: 'They sold over 800 [copies]... in Britain during [the] first couple of months so – since they printed only 1000 – it looks as though they'll sell them all (some are in U.S.A.)!'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 23 April 1975 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

179 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 20 January 1976 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

180 Williams's one concern was that she be given sufficient time to undertake further revisions to the first movement of Symphony No. 2; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 29 November 1976 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). It is impossible to know why, when the record (BBC Artium REGL381) was eventually made in March 1979, the plan to release the still un-issued recording of *Castell Caernarfon* was abandoned in favour of a first recording of *Ballads*. Williams's own choice of coupling (*ibid.*) was *Ave Maris Stella*: not eventually recorded until 1983.

181 For the most extensive reminiscences, see various contributors, 'Grace Williams: A Symposium', *Welsh Music*,

education, is any particular gift for diplomacy or persuasive ability to gradually bring others around to her own way of thinking. Ian Parrott's carefully-worded recollection –

I did not always agree with what Grace had to say on many matters but I found her, immediately, a stimulating person of integrity with whom to discuss and debate.<sup>182</sup>

– alludes to an approach probably admirable in its own, absolute right but ill-suited to maintaining a quasi-political position within established networks where others held financial or permissive powers. As oft-highlighted above, there is little indication in any of Williams's correspondence that she considered processes of ingratiation to be worthwhile or apparently conflicting ideologies to maintain the potential to overlap for the benefit of both parties involved.<sup>183</sup> This unwillingness to conform to the expectations of others, whether reasonable or otherwise, surely resulted in her frequent and sometimes extended exclusion from decision-making processes despite the likelihood of her contribution at least adding to the scope of any wider debate. Her priorities instead remained an assurance of the support of her own conscience, whatever the practical cost, and the maintenance of individual friendships, often with those (such as Daniel Jones) themselves to an extent isolated from the musical mainstream.

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V:6 (Summer 1977), pp. 15-30 and 'Grace Williams: A Symposium (Part Two), *Welsh Music*, V:7 (Winter 1977-78), pp. 41-60.

182 In *ibid.* (Part One). The present work is of insufficient scope to elaborate further upon the fascinating contrast between Williams's confidence in her own ideologies and lack thereof when assessing her own compositions.

183 The BBC is perhaps excepted from this observation; see Chapter II.





## Chapter II

# NATION SHALL SPEAK UNTO NATION

Grace Williams and the BBC in Wales

'You know it was a marvellous sensation, simply being asked to write something; someone wanting your music.'

(Grace Williams to A.J. Heward Rees, 1976)



The generation of British composers born during the first decade of the twentieth century were ideally and fortuitously positioned to benefit from the establishment of the British Broadcasting Company in October 1922.<sup>1</sup> Within two months of its Cardiff station's first broadcast in February 1923, Grace Williams, still a sixth-form student at the Barry County School for Girls, was able to listen in to the Company's offerings on her family's first crystal set. Later that year, she would visit the Castle Street studio as accompanist to her father's Romilly Boys' Choir, there meeting the station's first director, Major Arthur Corbett-Smith.<sup>2</sup> Less than a year later, her musical gifts allowed her to benefit directly from the Company: winning second prize (one guinea) in a dance music competition.<sup>3</sup> At such an early stage in her career as an active musician, however, she could not possibly have envisaged the near fifty-year relationship she was to establish with the fledgling outfit's successor – the British Broadcasting Corporation – and the consequent impact upon her composing life.<sup>4</sup>

### 1931-39: First Contact

In attempting to establish a detailed account of Grace Williams's career as a broadcast composer, the decade following this early success is comfortably the most difficult to chronicle.<sup>5</sup> It is almost certain that her music was not heard over the airwaves during her student days at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (1923-26), though the possibility of broadcasts produced whilst studying at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in the later 1920s cannot be entirely discounted.<sup>6</sup> Lack of documentary evidence to the contrary, however, suggests that the first opportunities wireless listeners had to experience Williams's work came in 1931. In the April of that year, it seems likely that the short-lived National Orchestra of Wales broadcast her ballet-scene *The Dance of the Red Shoes* (1920s?) but this would have paled into insignificance in comparison with the broadcast coverage of August's

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1 For a complete history of the BBC from its earliest days until the mid-1990s, see Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, 6 volumes (London: Oxford University Press, 1961-96). For texts relating specifically to the BBC in Wales, see John Davies, *Broadcasting and the BBC in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994) and Rowland Lucas, *The Voice of a Nation?* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1981).

2 Grace Williams, radio script 'In at the Start', broadcast 15 February 1973 (WRC 3600).

3 Warwick Braithwaite, letter to Grace Williams, 24 July 1924 (WMIC, uncatalogued). There is no suggestion that the prize-winning piece was subsequently broadcast.

4 The British Broadcasting Company officially became a Corporation (under a Royal Charter) on 1 January 1927.

5 The Grace Williams files at BBC WAC, which include over a thousand items of correspondence, do not hold any material dating from before 1933.

6 Referring to her time in Cardiff, Williams wrote 'Welsh radio no longer made much impact on me' and noted that she never met Corbett-Smith's successor as station director, Ernest Robert Appleton (Williams, 'In at the Start', *op. cit.*).

National Eisteddfod at Bangor.<sup>7</sup> The London Symphony Orchestra's performance of *Hen Walia* (1930) was relayed live on the BBC's National Programme and granted Williams's music access to enthusiasts across Britain for the first time – a privilege she was only rarely to enjoy in future years.<sup>8</sup>

However positive the BBC's response to the first broadcast of Williams's music may have been, *Hen Walia* failed to elicit any sudden flood of major radio performances. The following year's Eisteddfod premiere of *Suite for Orchestra* (1932) was again shared with the nation from Port Talbot, but there is nothing to suggest that the BBC's reasons for so doing had anything more to do with the composer than the occasion. Although a selection of smaller-scale works were heard during 1931-32, there is little evidence of any attempt on either party's behalf to forge a more lasting partnership.<sup>9</sup> With the arrival of Sam Jones as General Welsh Assistant at Broadcasting House, Cardiff, in November 1932, however, Williams found a permanent point of contact in Wales with whom she could establish a meaningful correspondence.<sup>10</sup>

Although Jones was appointed primarily to enhance the BBC's Welsh-language programming, it soon became apparent that his role encompassed a much broader responsibility for promoting Welsh culture and identity within a broadcasting region still inextricably linked with the west of England. As such, it is understandable that a high proportion of Williams's music transmitted soon after Jones's appointment had explicitly Welsh connotations. Notable in this regard, for example, are the broadcasts of Williams's arrangements of Welsh dance tunes on National wavelength in July 1933, and of Welsh oxen songs to the British Empire (via BBC World

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7 Williams's letter to Enid Parry, [received] April 1931 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued), refers to an 'old work' that 'they played ... awfully well', without specifying title or performers. Daniel Jones's contribution to 'Grace Williams: A Symposium (Part Two)', *Welsh Music*, V:7 (Winter 1977-78), pp. 41-60 recalls the occasion with certainty, but he incorrectly links this broadcast with his first writing to and meeting Williams: this happened almost ten years later, soon after the premiere of *Rhiannon*. For more full details of Eisteddfod performances of Williams's works, see Chapter I of the present work.

8 Other, non-broadcast performances had previously garnered some nationwide publicity: a RCM performance under Malcolm Sargent of *Two Psalms*, for example, would grant her her first critical mention in *The Times* (anonymous review, 12 December 1927, p. 19). Further significant national reviews of the 1930s covered performances of her works given as part of the Macnaghten-Lemare concert series for contemporary composers at London's Ballet Club and Mercury Theatre.

9 These broadcasts included Williams's now-lost *Rhapsody for Cello and Piano*, a setting of D.H. Lawrence's *Service of All the Dead*, and at least three other songs. Williams rarely gave full details of broadcast performances of this period in her correspondence, saying only, for example: 'there are hosts of songs .... (Did you hear Margaret Rees broadcast 4 of them?)'; see her letter to Enid Picton Davies (Parry), [undated] October 1932 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

10 Letters between Williams and Jones form the vast majority of the material dating from 1933-35 held at BBC WAC. For a detailed account of the BBC career of Sam Jones, see R. Alun Evans, *Stand By! Bywyd a gwaith Sam Jones* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1998).

Service) on St David's Day, 1934.<sup>11</sup> Whilst understandably grateful for the chance to hear any of her music in professional performances, however, Williams made no attempt to compose or promote any further music in this quasi-nationalistic vein. Instead, she continued to strive for performances of her nationally abstract and most contemporary compositions: chamber music and, in particular, songs.<sup>12</sup> Jones, remaining impartial, sought to arrange broadcasts of all Williams's works and did not seek to influence the subject matter of her compositions.

Far beyond Williams or Jones's control were the instrumental forces available to composers in Cardiff. In 1934, the Western Studio Orchestra comprised a mere nine players and, whilst able to manage Williams's song accompaniments, could not have performed any of the substantial instrumental works which had featured in recent eisteddfodau.<sup>13</sup> Instead, she began to use the contacts formed in Cardiff as a springboard for more ambitious plans elsewhere – via that year's National Eisteddfod at Neath, and the resultant national coverage – and asked Jones for a reference concerning her competence as an orchestral composer.<sup>14</sup> Upon discovering that the Eisteddfod programme had long since been finalised, Williams must have concluded that the Western Studio Orchestra was the most immediately profitable outlet for her compositions and decided to write specifically for it – despite the likely limitations the scoring would impose on future performances beyond the BBC. Frustrated by a perceived lack of enthusiasm for a programme of songs with Parry Jones as soloist, she suggested an alternative to the proposed second half of piano solos: 'a short suite for Pianoforte and Chamber Orchestra – myself as soloist.'<sup>15</sup> This work, later to be entitled *Suite for Nine Instruments*, represented an important shift in Williams's attitude towards the station orchestra. Although she had previously scored for them as accompanists of *Two Psalms* and various songs, this would be the first time that she had treated them as an ensemble in their own right.<sup>16</sup>

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11 The oxen songs were sung without Williams's piano accompaniment, however, so can hardly be considered true arrangements. Williams credited her father, W.M. Williams, for tracking them down 'in some musty old books in Cardiff library'; see her letter to Sam Jones, [postmark] 7 March 1934 (BBC WAC, A).

12 Williams was particularly keen on a BBC premiere (with Parry Jones as soloist) of her two newly-scored settings of Byron for tenor and orchestra: *Oh! snatch'd away in beauty's bloom* and *Oh! weep for those that wept*; see correspondence between Williams and Jones at BBC WAC (A), 1934-35.

13 For further reading concerning the Western Studio Orchestra and its successors, see Peter Reynolds, *BBC National Orchestra & Chorus of Wales – A Celebration* (Cardiff: BBC Books, 2009). It comprised two violins and one each of flute, clarinet, trumpet, piano, viola, 'cello and double bass; mirroring the ensembles of the Northern, Midland and Scottish BBC regional centres; see Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

14 Grace Williams, letter to Sam Jones, [undated] July 1934 (BBC WAC, A). William Reed, the leader of the London Symphony Orchestra, had agreed to consider conducting her *Concert Overture* and must have been a strong advocate for its appearance in Caernarfon in 1935 (see Chapter I of the present work for full details).

15 Grace Williams, letter to Sam Jones, [received] 8 August 1934. The agreed programme was immediately scheduled for 24 September; see Sam Jones, letter to Grace Williams, 10 August 1934 (BBC WAC, A).

16 Williams began work on the suite in November 1934, completing it the following month. It was premiered on 14 January 1935 as the featured item in 'Llawysgrifau' ('In Manuscript') – the fourth programme in the first

The *Suite* also represented a new musical departure for Williams's career as a broadcast composer in Wales. The circumstances of its composition, in part as a reaction against the BBC's seeming unwillingness to programme her latest vocal works, add new weight to Boyd's assertion that she 'was attempting to sound "modern" for the sake of sounding "modern"'.<sup>17</sup> Williams cannot have been unaware that this work, with the clear influence of Bartók hanging overhead and far removed from any Vaughan Williams-inspired pastoral clichés, had the potential to awaken its audience to the presence of an exciting young composer in their midst. Sam Jones, who, as an intelligent, well-educated and widely read man, was surely amongst the demographic intended to be impressed, wrote:

I was baffled by your work ... and yet thoroughly enjoyed it, paradoxically speaking! So you see, there is still hope for me! I certainly think that it was the most exciting item in the programme, and I am hoping for more in the future.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, no other similar responses survive to give a wider impression of the *Suite*'s impact upon its listeners in Wales.<sup>19</sup> Williams herself found it 'more satisfying than anything else I've done', and praised her 'Cardiffians' for their willingness to perform her music 'with conviction'.<sup>20</sup> If her intention in composing the *Suite* was to elicit further performances from the BBC, however, she was to be disappointed: 1935 very nearly became a barren year until she was granted a full forty-five minute programme to herself on 23 November.<sup>21</sup> Although offered the opportunity to write a new work for the broadcast – briefly considering a set of variations on the nursery tune 'Jim Cro' – Williams soon rejected the idea on the grounds that 'it was hardly worth bothering to score' for the instrumentation of the present Cardiff ensemble.<sup>22</sup> Whilst this undoubtedly represented a programme of some significance, every item in the finalised programme had been previously broadcast.

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radio series devoted specifically to Welsh composers; see letters between Grace Williams, Sam Jones and Reginald Redman, August 1934 to January 1935 (BBC WAC, A).

17 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

18 Sam Jones, letter to Grace Williams, 15 January 1935 (BBC WAC, A). If the music of the other works included in the programme reflected their somewhat saccharine titles, it is little wonder that Jones considered Williams's score to be the most exciting item in the programme: *Three Welsh Sketches* ('Long Ago', 'Summer Days' and 'Village Dance') and *Flowers of the Field* by Idris Lewis, and songs by Howard Lucas (*Love's Close* and *As I lay in the morning sun*), Rhyda Jones, Claudia Lloyd and Meirion Williams. Lloyd's *Theme and Variations* was also broadcast.

19 Benjamin Britten, who was attempting to tune in to West Region from Lowestoft, also praised what little he could hear and promised to attend the forthcoming London performance; see his letter to Grace Williams, 16 January 1935 (private collection: Eryl Freestone, uncatalogued).

20 Grace Williams, letter to Benjamin Britten, [undated] January 1935 (BPF, 9103412 'Grace Williams Collection'). It is possible, but unverifiable, that Williams herself played the piano in this performance.

21 Sam Jones, letter to Grace Williams, 7 October 1935 (BBC WAC, A).

22 Grace Williams, letter to Sam Jones, [undated] October 1935. The programme included *Two Psalms*, *The Mad Maid's Song*, *Green Rain*, *I had a little Nut-tree*, *Service of All the Dead*, a selection of Welsh folk dances and the *Suite for Nine Instruments*.

Although the constraints of the instrumental forces available continued to be a substantial hindrance, promise of significant change had come with the BBC's decision that autumn to divide its West Region into two distinct administrative centres in Cardiff and Bristol – albeit still sharing one wavelength for transmission.<sup>23</sup> This major shift in approach brought with it staffing changes that would fundamentally alter Williams's relationship with the BBC in Wales for the coming decades. Sam Jones and Reginald Redman departed for Bangor and Bristol respectively; the Western Studio Orchestra was disbanded and replaced with a twenty-strong Welsh Symphony Orchestra; and two wholly new posts were advertised: for a Music Director/Conductor and an Assistant Music Director, both to be based in Cardiff.<sup>24</sup> Williams identified two of the most likely candidates at an early stage: Idris Lewis, the musical director of British International Pictures, and Mansel Thomas, a London-based freelance musician originally from the Rhondda.<sup>25</sup> Of the two, Williams had a distinct preference for Mansel Thomas, whom she considered to be 'far + away the best equipped Welsh musician' for the role.<sup>26</sup> Lewis, by contrast, she thought of as an ardent conservative:

I know nothing about the man except that a chap who can write such tripe can't be considered to be a serious musician in any sense of the term. As a composer of Gaumont Graphic music I'm sure he is ideal but ... he told a friend of Mansel's that he didn't like Mansel's songs which were broadcast from the Eisteddfod (+ which M. agrees are very mild) because they were too modern!! So if he is installed at Cardiff it will be the end of things for us.<sup>27</sup>

Being in no position to influence BBC appointment policy, and determined to demonstrate that 'there is some young blood in Wales', Williams applied for the job herself but did not make the shortlist.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of January 1936, Lewis and Thomas were in post as Musical Director and Assistant respectively. It must have been with sincere relief that, within weeks of Lewis's appointment,

23 Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

24 The new orchestra could boast a flute, an oboe, two clarinets, a bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, a trombone, a piano, timpani, five violins and one each of viola, cello and double bass; see Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

Whilst understandably pleased with the deployment of a larger ensemble, Williams regretted the departure of Redman, who had conducted the orchestra since its formation in 1931 and whom she fondly remembered as 'a gentle, friendly man, very sympathetic towards young composers'; see her 'In at the Start', *op. cit.*

25 Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66. According to Reynolds (*op. cit.*, p. 20), Sam Jones had persuaded Lewis to apply. For career summaries, see Rhidian Griffiths, 'Idris Lewis (1889-1952)', *Welsh Music*, IX:1 (Autumn 1989), pp. 27-29 and Lyn Davies, 'Mansel Thomas (1909-1986)', *Welsh Music*, VII:10 (Summer 1989), pp. 31-41.

26 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Picton Davies, [undated] 1935 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

27 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Picton Davies, [undated] September 1935 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Williams was probably not aware of a veteran of the British Broadcasting Company's opinion that 'Lewis prefers Welsh music, however bad, to music speaking generally'; see Roger Eckersley, BBC internal memorandum, 3 March 1938 (BBC WAC R34/944) quoted in Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

28 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Picton Davies, [undated] 1935 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). It is likely that Williams's inexperience in orchestral conducting and relatively low level of spoken Welsh were both significant hindrances.



Williams accepted the invitation to contribute a work for string orchestra to a forthcoming programme.<sup>29</sup> Lewis, in fact, welcomed the premiere of her new work, *Elegy*, without openly expressing any concern for its potential 'modernity'.<sup>30</sup> Given this, and the positive reception previously given to *Suite for Nine Instruments*, Williams seems to have concluded that a promising route to future broadcasts would combine her most contemporary compositions with a more musically conservative, Welsh source-inspired score from the early 1930s. In taking the initiative by suggesting a programme to Lewis rather than waiting to be offered one, Williams suggested combining her two latest songs with a new version of *Hen Walia*, explicitly referring to it as a 'Welsh overture' that could be titled as such if a translation were required.<sup>31</sup> She was also very aware of the commercial prospects for such a work's nationalistic connotations and immediately tuneful and audience-appealing nature, suggesting that it had the potential to be a 'best-seller' for Lewis's Welsh audiences.<sup>32</sup>

Whilst acknowledging that potential listeners in South Wales and South-West England represented something of a captive audience, Williams was simultaneously concerned to avoid becoming a composer only broadcast on regional wavelengths. Perhaps aware of the sizeable Welsh community living in England's other major cities, and certainly sure of increased audiences, she requested the return of the *Hen Walia* score to Broadcasting House, London, in 1937.<sup>33</sup> She was also afraid that the BBC staff, having not scheduled a performance of a new work for eighteen months, might be relying on previous successes in place of more imaginative programming.<sup>34</sup> Any seeming desire to escape the limitations of the Cardiff transmitters should, however, be considered alongside Williams's understanding that the Welsh audience market still represented the best first step towards her greater recognition as a composer. Even whilst imploring the BBC to premiere *Theseus and Ariadne* (c1935) in preference to re-programming

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29 Idris Lewis, letter to Grace Williams, 4 January 1936 (BBC WAC, A).

30 Idris Lewis, letter to Grace Williams, 7 January 1936 (BBC WAC, A).

31 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 3 March 1936 (BBC WAC, A). The songs, both written during the preceding autumn, were *Stand forth, Seithenin!* and *Thou art the One Truth*. The somewhat complex evolution of *Hen Walia* is discussed in Chapter III of the present work, but it is worth noting here that the version presented to Lewis probably differed substantially from that heard at the Eisteddfod in 1931.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Grace Williams, letter to Mansel Thomas, 5 May 1937 (BBC WAC, A). It is evident from later correspondence that neither Lewis nor Thomas did as requested until reminded by Williams in October, although it could never be proven that this was a conscious attempt to keep *Hen Walia* 'in house'. Williams had produced a version scored for full symphony orchestra in the hope that 'it would be done in London'; see her letter to Idris Lewis, 27 November 1938 (BBC WAC, B).

34 '[In] the far-off days ... Cardiff was quite eager to give performances of my things + I didn't have to write horrid pushing letters to remind them that I was still alive.' – Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 26 July 1937 (BBC WAC, A). Williams's very limited output in 1936/7 meant, however, that she could hardly have argued that swathes of new compositions were being ignored in favour of outdated, immature works.

*Suite for Nine Instruments*, for example, she preferred the option of keeping the *Suite* in Cardiff in case a broadcast could soon be scheduled to a promise from Cracow of an imminent performance in Poland.<sup>35</sup> Despite being at a relatively early stage in her career as a broadcast composer, Williams recognised the tension between the safe but potentially stifling role as a Cardiff favourite and the riskier, but more publicly rewarding option of continuing to press for performances in England and beyond.

If, during 1937 and the first eleven months of 1938, Williams clearly felt aggrieved at a perceived lack of innovation on the part of the BBC, a sudden reversal in fortune would arrive in December.<sup>36</sup> First, the BBC Welsh Orchestra were specially augmented for a performance of *Hen Walia* relayed to London as part of a programme dedicated to Welsh composers. Despite still emphasising the 'regional' nature of BBC policy, the event left Williams full of nationalistic pride:

As a group of regional composers we can hold our own with every other region in the rest of the country. Every one of us can't be a genius or even original, but Wales isn't going to produce a star composer until there is an awful lot of composing going on all round; + that is at last happening ... even if it is reminiscent – + unpretentious .... I hope the B.B.C. realises how abysmal Welsh compositions used to be[.]<sup>37</sup>

It is perfectly conceivable that the apparent success of this programme contributed heavily to the second, still more significant event that was to follow over the new year period (1938-39) and would combine the ambitions of the BBC with those of its composing asset. Although the circumstances surrounding this event cannot be completely documented, its exact terms were clear: the BBC Welsh Region granted Williams her first paid commission, offering a fee of 'twenty guineas for a suite on some Welsh subject that will take twenty minutes to perform.'<sup>38</sup> Presuming BBC origin – and there is no evidence to suggest that it was composer-imposed – the phrase 'on some Welsh subject' is a crucial one. Whilst the scale of the commission

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35 Grace Williams, letters to Idris Lewis, [received] 17 August and 15 September 1937 (BBC WAC, A). Neither the contact in Poland nor the manner in which he had come to know Williams's music can be identified.

36 During this period, Lewis continued to programme Williams's Welsh folk songs and *Hen Walia*, but little else: only *Theseus and Ariadne* and the insubstantial *Variations: Breuddwyd Dafydd Rhys* (c1934) received their first broadcast performances.

37 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, [received] 10 December 1938 (BBC WAC, B). The programme had been broadcast on Regional wavelength on 8 December, and included works by Morfydd Owen (*Nocturne*), Arwel Hughes (*Fantasia on an Old Welsh Ecclesiastical Tune*), Mansel Thomas (*Theme and Variations*), Kenneth Harding (*Phaeton*) and Hubert Davies (*Concert Rondo*). Williams herself was responsible for the replacement of her *Concert Overture* with *Hen Walia* because of her concerns about the size and capability of the performing forces; see her letter to Idris Lewis, 27 November 1938 (BBC WAC, B).

38 J.G. Roberts, letter to Grace Williams, 2 January 1939 (BBC WAC, B). Williams had been invited to meet with Roberts and Idris Lewis on 30 December to discuss the proposal of a commission, but it is impossible to state with certainty where their inspiration for such a change in approach had come from.

implicitly recognised Williams as a composer worth patronising in her own right, the dictation of subject matter might suggest the presence of an ulterior motive on the BBC's behalf. This specification had the potential to publicise the broadcasting region both within Wales, by fostering a sense of familiar appeal, and without, by creating a distinctive brand. John Davies refers to this period (1937-39) as the 'consolidation of the region' and the 'heroic years': a time during which programming could be planned for the first time solely with a Welsh audience in mind following wavelength separation from the West of England on 4 July 1937.<sup>39</sup> The Welsh Region was buoyed by a new confidence born of independence; a confidence that would naturally bear artistic fruit in expansive projects that could be used to highlight the region's achievements. Kenneth Wright's later remark perhaps implies London's recognition of the scope of the project being undertaken: 'we ... hope that [the commission's] performance will do still more to further the cause of Welsh music and to exemplify what you are doing in Wales to foster native talent.'<sup>40</sup>

Whatever the BBC's motives, Williams found the subject of the commission to be simple enough to adhere to and that the very notion of the inherent recognition held natural appeal. In accepting the task, choosing a suitably Welsh topic and completing the musical sketches by 22 January 1939, she was hardly resigning herself to regional stigmatism but acknowledging an opportunity to broaden awareness in all circles of her capabilities as an orchestral composer.<sup>41</sup> The choice of a mythological subject matter – the legends of Rhiannon from the medieval Mabinogion – assured popular interest within Wales whilst not alienating those beyond, whilst the incorporation of the word 'symphonic' into the title perhaps sought to provide additional gravitas.<sup>42</sup> From the outset, however, she presumed that a key element of the commissioning process would be the work's swift placing in a broadcast from London, with any earlier performance in Wales merely being a staging post in the performance process.<sup>43</sup> For entirely

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39 Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 101. Davies also notes that 6 January 1939 was the date from which the *Radio Times* adopted the more nationally representative 'Wales' ahead of 'The Welsh Region' as its listings heading.

40 Kenneth Wright, BBC internal memorandum [to Mansel Thomas?], 25 April 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

41 Quite aside from the matter of the incredibly swift completion of the score, Williams's enthusiasm for the project as a whole cannot be doubted: 'I have absolutely loved doing it + worked at it incessantly .... For the first time for years I find teaching getting in the way + wish + wish I were a full-time composer'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] January 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Her gratitude for the commission is also ably demonstrated in its dedication to the BBC Welsh Orchestra.

42 The history and appropriateness of the various titles adopted ('Symphonic Study: Rhiannon'; 'Symphonic Legend: Rhiannon'; and the final 'Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon' amongst others) are not debated here. For comment on the relationship between the narrative of the legend and that of the music, see Chapter III of the present work.

43 'I think perhaps it would be quite a good thing to try it out on Wales first; then if there is anything unsatisfactory ... I can re-write for the London relay'; see Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, [received] 24 February 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

different reasons, Lewis was also keen to avoid a Welsh premiere because of the increased costs of necessarily augmenting the orchestra to near-double its usual size.<sup>44</sup> By the end of May, the planned Cardiff performance – originally due to take place in late spring – had been postponed indefinitely, and to the autumn of 1939 at the earliest.<sup>45</sup> This delay caused Williams both to temporarily abandon composing as a source either of pleasure or income and to radically re-assess the nature of her relationship with the BBC in Wales. Between January and June 1939, she considered her position to have shifted from a composer with exceptionally close ties with a national institution to 'leader of the opposition at Broadcasting House, Cardiff'.<sup>46</sup> Comparing her recent experience with the invitation to Arwel Hughes to conduct his own *Fantasia* at the BBC Proms, she further claimed that the BBC's programming had directly contributed to an inaccurate and limited public conception of her work.<sup>47</sup> 'People are beginning', she wrote, '– or rather they have been saying for some time that after all I've only written one work – it's only Hen Walia all the time. Little do they know that there are stacks of other things which could be played instead[.]'<sup>48</sup> It seems likely that this frustration was both an artificial construct born of temporary mishap and a genuine response to mounting concern, and mid-1939 thus marks a convenient hiatus in the Williams-BBC dialogue: a point at which neither party could have been entirely content with the behaviour and attitude of the other.

### 1939-54: The Freedom of Dependency

Neville Chamberlain's declaration of Britain's involvement in war in Europe on 3 September 1939 immediately impacted heavily on the BBC as a whole and its regions in particular.<sup>49</sup> For Welsh musicians, the most obvious result was the swift reduction of the twenty orchestra members to a quintet and, by September's end, the ensemble had been disbanded entirely.

44 Idris Lewis, letter to Grace Williams, 6 March 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

45 The reasons behind this delay were complex, amongst them being the requirement for a score broadcast on National wavelength to be approved by the BBC in London before being scheduled; an apparent lack of urgency on behalf of Lewis and Wright to press for an early date; and Williams's absolute insistence on being present in Cardiff for rehearsals; see correspondence between Williams and Lewis, February-June 1939 (BBC WAC, B) and her letter to Enid Parry, 11 June 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

46 '[H]ere endeth my swan song. You may now say God be praised because I don't think I shall trouble you any more. I just don't want to trouble myself any more about it all, either; luckily there are lots of nice things in life I can be interested in which don't give me the feeling of utter frustration which composing so often gives. No, it isn't any good; really it isn't.'; Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 1 June 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

47 *Ibid.* and letter to Enid Parry, 11 June 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). One might argue that her comparison with Hughes was partially driven by jealousy, and that it represents evidence of a fear of her diminishing importance in a growingly competitive free market. The outbreak of war ended the chance of Hughes's work being performed at the Proms that year; see Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

48 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 1 June 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

49 For a full account of the role of the BBC Welsh Region, and the Cardiff station in particular, during 1939-45, see Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-147; Reynolds (*op. cit.*, pp. 22-23) briefly summarises the activities of the music staff during the same years.

Williams, whose pacifist beliefs and abhorrence for warfare were on a par with Britten's, also found herself taking an unexpected financial hit when she discovered that the lack of a performance date for *Rhiannon* meant no fee was officially due from the BBC.<sup>50</sup> Soon afterwards, however, the abolition of the BBC Welsh Orchestra proved unexpectedly beneficial, when Kenneth Wright's decision to definitively schedule *Rhiannon* for 24 October necessitated that its performers be the BBC Symphony Orchestra Section B.<sup>51</sup> Whilst the plans for transmission (on National wavelength) remained much the same as the original intentions, the marked decrease in regional broadcasting during wartime ensured that all radio listeners would be tuning in to one channel. This, and the higher public profile of the new orchestra, doubtless contributed to the work achieving an unexpected, and positive, critical review in *The Listener*.<sup>52</sup>

Despite *Rhiannon*'s success, Williams's restricted income (limited solely to her part-time teaching job) very soon led her to consider using the BBC as a possible source of more regular work. In offering to compose for the re-established Cardiff quintet, she was aware that a high priority for Lewis would be that which had become evident in his repeated scheduling of *Hen Walia*: arrangements of Welsh folk tunes.<sup>53</sup> One might suspect, therefore, that her first composition offered to BBC Wales after war's outbreak was a matter as much of pragmatism as inspiration.<sup>54</sup> In completing her *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* in January 1940, she could be confident of tapping into the BBC's established market and hope for more regular performances. Kenneth Wright's contribution to the BBC reading panel's assessment of the work make interesting reading because, although his encouragement for a performance is undeniable, there is an apparent subtext which implies that any scheduling should be done not because *Fantasia* was especially worthwhile music but simply because its composer and content were Welsh:

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50 Williams took steps to recover her already incurred costs by bypassing Cardiff and writing to the BBC in London; see her letter to [Senior Assistant Accountant], 11 September 1939 (BBC WAC, K). After consultation between the two departments, she was paid the full fee in October.

51 Kenneth Wright, letter to Grace Williams, 11 September 1939 (BBC WAC, H). The original intention was to have Adrian Boult or Clarence Raybould conduct: Williams, newly evacuated to Rutland with the Camden School for Girls, was probably sincere in stating 'I think perhaps I begin to live again', but was likely less than thrilled to subsequently hear that Idris Lewis had been asked to conduct instead; see her letter to Kenneth Wright, 15 September 1939 (BBC WAC, H).

52 J.A. Westrup, 'Broadcast Music: Categories and Individulaity', *The Listener*, XXII:564 (2 November 1939), p. 884. Williams's comments on the two orchestras make the comparison explicit: 'The orchestra was of course rather marvellous + things which would have taken a month of Sundays to rehearse elsewhere came off quite slickly at first go'; see her letter to Kenneth Wright, 26 October 1939 (BBC WAC, H).

53 Lewis confirmed this prediction after a delay of more than two months in responding to Williams's letter of 30 November 1939; see his letter to Grace Williams, 8 February 1940 (BBC WAC, B).

54 In arguing this, one has to foresee a certain amount of foresight on Williams's part: she could not, of course, have imagined the new work being performed in Cardiff under wartime conditions. It is also true that she resorted to 'light music' as a means of escapism; see Chapter III of the present work.

May I appeal for a performance now on the grounds that (1) we do wish to encourage the creation of Welsh orchestral music (2) this is the first thing of its kind (I believe) in Welsh musical literature (3) it is competently done, not brilliantly, but worth a hearing (4) could it not be put into a little Welsh prog. to be conducted by Idris Lewis in Bristol as a gesture to his position, + a recognition of the temporary suspension of the Welsh Orchestra?<sup>55</sup>

The other reading panellists, including Clarence Raybould and Reginald Redman, concurred that the only grounds for *Fantasia's* performance were those outlined by Wright or the work's obvious appeal to children.<sup>56</sup>

The continuing absence of the BBC Welsh Orchestra, with its obvious limitations on matters of scoring and playability, allowed Williams to avoid having to choose between the relative security of Cardiff and the improbability, but greater artistic impact, of a performance elsewhere. In the knowledge that the BBC were still obliged to provide programmes of particular interest to Welsh listeners, she was able to write complex works for full symphony orchestra without fear of being referred straight back to regional broadcasting.<sup>57</sup> It is with these circumstances in mind that one might consider why two of Williams's most substantial and ambitious works were written under wartime conditions. Neither *Sinfonia Concertante* (1941) nor *Symphonic Impressions* (1943) could ever have been performed by the pre-war Cardiff ensemble without considerable augmentation and all the risks associated with it.<sup>58</sup> Although *Fantasia* was premiered by the BBC Northern Orchestra on 29 October 1941 and *Hen Walia* included in the first programme of a new series devoted to Welsh music on 1 December, there was little progress concerning other works until 30 September 1942, when *Sinfonia Concertante* was granted a position in a BBC repertoire rehearsal.<sup>59</sup> In the meantime, despite her pointed remark that she was 'impatient to hear more recent things', Williams's compositions continued to be otherwise represented in broadcast terms only by her folk song arrangements.<sup>60</sup>

55 Kenneth Wright, BBC reading panel report on Grace Williams's *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Rhymes* [title under which it was submitted], 26 July 1940 (BBC WAC, X). Boyd's negative assessment that 'it is impossible to ignore the fact that the harmonizations are often heavy and conventional, and the structure loose' joins those of the work's original reviewers; see *op. cit.*, p. 22.

56 Various contributors, BBC reading panel report on Grace Williams's *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Rhymes*, 26 July 1940 (BBC WAC, X).

57 BBC WAC file R27/515 (*W*) contains detailed correspondence between Lewis, Julian Herbage and other senior BBC staff in Wales and London concerning the broadcasting of Welsh performers and composers on a regular basis. The frustration on both sides is perfectly evident and politeness decidedly strained throughout.

58 Williams's comments that *Sinfonia Concertante* 'would have to be reserved, I'm afraid, for the big orchestra – regions wouldn't be powerful enough' and 'I am sure you will agree when you look at [*Symphonic Impressions*] that it needs the big orchestra for its first performance – you know how risky it might be with one of the other orchestras' can be seen as expressing considerable satisfaction at the prospect; see her letters to Idris Lewis, 30 August 1941 (BBC WAC, B) and 13 December 1943 (BBC WAC, C).

59 Harry Vowles, letter to Grace Williams, 12 September 1942 (BBC WAC, H); note that the work was originally entitled simply 'Piano Concerto'. A complete performance was eventually scheduled for 7 January 1943 and given by Margaret Good and the BBC Symphony Orchestra Section B under Clarence Raybould.

60 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 4 December 1941 (BBC WAC, B). Whilst *Fantasia* was unquestionably

Furthermore, fears had already begun to surface that the initial success of *Fantasia* would prove counter-productive in much the same manner as the popularity of *Hen Walia* had seemed to inhibit BBC enthusiasm for other works:

Please the *Fantasia* isn't my most mature thing. I tossed it off (i.e. the sketch of it) in an evening whereas I've spent months on the other things I've written during the last few years. It was never meant to be taken seriously. I like the little work well enough – lovely Welsh tunes – but, but, but

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Upon first hearing of Williams's intention to write a symphony in June 1942, however, Lewis would not have been ignorant of its possible implications for Welsh orchestral music and, consequently, its performers and broadcasters.<sup>62</sup> Wales had, to date, produced no symphonist of any note and, were the Welsh BBC to be involved in the performance of a new work of such significance, it would represent something of a publicity coup.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, under contemporary conditions and with the end of the monthly programmes of works by Welsh composers, he could not guarantee any such an occasion. Once the score had been completed, the strong recommendations of the BBC reading panel might have been considered sufficient to ensure it an early hearing elsewhere, but Williams's nationality seemed to provide a reason to place it only in a programme of principally regional appeal.<sup>64</sup> However, despite Herbert Howells's and Gordon Jacob's comments, and Kenneth Wright's suggestion that *Symphonic Impressions* be included in the major series 'Music Of Our Time', Julian Herbage preferred that it be 'included in the next Concert of Welsh Orchestral Music' under Idris Lewis.<sup>65</sup> Williams's attempt to use her lack of faith in Lewis's conducting skills to argue for a performance in a programme of wider interest was also unsuccessful.<sup>66</sup>

a recent work, there can be little doubt that she considered *The Song of Mary, Gogonedawg Arglwydd* (both 1939), and *Sinfonia Concertante* to be more artistically important and representative.

61 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, [received] 30 June 1942 (BBC WAC, C).

62 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 9 June 1942 (BBC WAC, C). For a detailed history of *Symphonic Impressions*'s composition, see the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007), pp. 4-18.

63 Kevin Adams records a symphony by Cyril Jenkins dating from 1919 in his 'Welsh Orchestral Music 1945 – 1970' (PhD dissertation, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, 1980), p. 12, whilst the two surviving, undated symphonies by Joseph Parry (1841-1903) are perhaps the earliest by a Welsh composer. Because the premiere of Williams's work was delayed until 1950, the first Welsh symphony to achieve broadcast performance would be that of Daniel Jones in 1948.

64 'A work of something more than mere 'promise'. It has no dull moments: is not extreme in idiom; and is technically very assured. This work sh<sup>d</sup> be heard.'; 'Full of ideas and vitality ... room should undoubtedly be found for it.' Herbert Howells and Gordon Jacob, BBC reading panel report on Grace Williams's *Symphonic Impressions*, 28 June 1944 (BBC WAC, X).

65 Kenneth Wright, note to Julian Herbage (appended to the reading panel report), *ibid.* Herbage's response justified his decision by noting that 'there are other plans for "Music Of Our Time"'; see his note on Harry Vowles's BBC internal memorandum to Julian Herbage, 10 August 1944 (BBC WAC, H).

66 'Our main problem here is to avoid [*Symphonic Impressions*] having to go into a programme of Welsh music conducted by Idris Lewis, as we know that the composer would prefer it to be conducted by either Sir Adrian

Whilst not directly impacting upon compositional output, these wartime BBC policies suggest that Welsh composers' works could be easily excluded from the more frequent and mainstream broadcasts available to their English counterparts. By imposing criteria on Williams's work other than its inherent musical qualities, the BBC created a queue of scores waiting for an available slot: a situation explicitly acknowledged by Lewis, who counselled 'I think it would be wiser not to say anything about "Owen Glendower" until we get your other two works performed, don't you think?'<sup>67</sup> When war ended, therefore, and the BBC Welsh Orchestra was eventually re-established in 1946 with Mansel Thomas at the helm, there might naturally have been expected to be a relieving of the pressure on this backlog.<sup>68</sup> For Williams, however, the immediate benefits would be limited; firstly because of her increasingly frequent bouts of ill-health and secondly because the manner of the BBC's re-formation of its Cardiff ensemble did not, in her opinion, demonstrate a sincere commitment to orchestral music in Wales.<sup>69</sup> Although the war had restricted broadcast frequency, the temporary dissolution of the BBC Welsh Orchestra and establishment of programmes of Welsh music given by the BBC Symphony Orchestra had encouraged Williams to demonstrate greater creativity and ambition. The news that the new body would have thirty-one players – eleven more than the pre-war ensemble but at least twenty short of the BBC's other regional orchestras – therefore led to considerable frustration on her part. Despite Lewis's stated intent 'that *all* [emphasis added] new works submitted to us be given a preliminary performance ... with the composer and ourselves present',<sup>70</sup> Williams was not prepared to countenance a small-scale performance even of her most significant unperformed work:

[F]or [*Symphonic Impressions*'s] first performance it just won't do to import a few extras from here there + everywhere – it's got to have a fair chance on its trial run .... unless it can be done under the best conditions I'm prepared to let it lie on the shelf indefinitely.<sup>71</sup>

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or C.A.C. [Clarence Raybould?]; see Harry Vowles, BBC internal memorandum to [K. Lennon?], 15 August 1944 (BBC WAC, H).

- 67 Idris Lewis, letter to Grace Williams, 2 October 1944 (BBC WAC, C). The major contributory factor to the failure to schedule a performance of *Symphonic Impressions* was the presence of a proposed programme of premieres for Williams's *Gogonedawg Arglwydd* and *Song of Mary*. Both works were performed on 16 February 1945 by the BBC Singers and Symphony Orchestra under Leslie Woodgate (with Margaret Rees as soloist) in the last known BBC broadcast of a work by Williams before war's end in September.
- 68 Between the end of the war and the re-formation of the orchestra, Lewis had shown no great drive to obtain performance dates for Williams's major works, settling instead on *Fantasia* (programmed opposite Arwel Hughes's far more substantial *Prelude for Orchestra* on St David's Day 1946) and a broadcast of a group of her early songs – none first performances and all more than ten years old.
- 69 In discussing the years 1945-54, Boyd deems them 'the least productive in Grace Williams's entire career as far as new concert works were concerned', attributing the immediate decline in output to illness and exhaustion; *op. cit.*, p. 28. During 1945-6, Williams also actively sought a career change; see correspondence between Idris Lewis, Gwynfryn Roberts and Grace Williams, May-November 1945 (BBC WAC, C).
- 70 Idris Lewis, [standard letter sent to Welsh composers], 4 October 1946 (BBC WAC, C).
- 71 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, [undated] October 1946 (BBC WAC, C). Lewis had stated his desire to perform *Symphonic Impressions* before Christmas in the BBC pamphlet *Your Broadcast Music*, Autumn 1946



Confirmation that Williams was entirely dissatisfied with the new arrangements for music in Cardiff was secured in May 1947. Although the orchestra had been functioning for six months and had premiered Williams's *Sea Sketches* on 31 March, she remained convinced that the restricted scope of its instrumentation actively constrained her compositional creativity. The result of her frustration would not be a sustained, constructive dialogue on the BBC's role in sustaining contemporary music in Wales, however, but an outburst focussed solely on the inadequacy of Cardiff's resources. Significantly, Williams did not attribute blame to the Welsh Region itself, but to those London-based policy-makers who, she argued, were treating Welsh radio listeners and musicians as second-class citizens when compared to their Scottish and North Regional counterparts:

[The orchestra's] further development is handicapped because its numbers are not up to full-strength ... and its repertory must remain confined between narrow limits ... That, apparently, is the official attitude: we [the Welsh] are to have the orchestra we deserve.<sup>72</sup>

Her allegations were expressed still more freely to William Haley, the BBC Director General, whose response could only have hardened her increasing belief that the conservative state of music-making at Cardiff was not solely of the region's own making:

[Williams to Haley] The orchestra is billed as a national orchestra. Surely, as such, it should be all-embracing in its repertoire ... Welsh music-lovers are not satisfied with the new orchestra's light-music programmes. Many in their ignorance are blaming the orchestra for lack of enterprise [...]<sup>73</sup>

[Haley to Williams] [W]hat the BBC required when the Welsh Orchestra was re-established was a Light Orchestra ... it is no valid criticism of this body of players that they are not a National Orchestra; they were never to be.<sup>74</sup>

By rejecting the notion that the BBC Welsh Orchestra had a national remit, however, the BBC would fail to recognise a certain inherent hypocrisy in statements such as: '[o]nly once or twice did [*Symphonic Impressions*] sound sufficiently Welsh.'<sup>75</sup> These demonstrated a sense of expectation that a work by a Welsh composer should in some indefinable manner be differentiable from an English counterpart whilst, at the same time, its likely conditions of performance would be restricted to an ensemble whose function as an instrument of national expression was explicitly denied. As one of Wales's foremost broadcast composers of the

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but instead selected *Fantasia* for the first in the series of new Welsh orchestral programmes. He subsequently admitted to Williams that he had no serious intention of performing the larger work that season; see Idris Lewis, letter to Grace Williams, 17 October 1946 (BBC WAC, C).

72 Grace Williams, letter to the editor, *Western Mail*, [published] 3 May 1947, p. 3.

73 Grace Williams, letter to William Haley, 2 May 1947 (BBC WAC, C). Williams ensured that she levelled no criticism at the orchestral players or their conductor, Mansel Thomas; see also her letter to Eric Warr, 11 August 1947 (BBC WAC, H).

74 William Haley, letter to Grace Williams, 8 May 1947 (BBC WAC, C). It seems doubtful that Williams ever responded to this letter or took her concerns any further, perhaps resigned to the inevitability of being unable to affect BBC central policy.

75 Eric Warr, report on BBC Repertoire Rehearsal, 11 November 1947 (BBC WAC, X).

period, Williams was unfortunately positioned at the heart of a barely acknowledged internal debate concerning the BBC's role in establishing an independent voice for Wales in broadcasting, without the freedom to express her views without fear of repercussions.<sup>76</sup>

If aspects of media operations in Wales were, by the late 1940s, posing considerable cause for concern, Williams had undoubted reason to be grateful for the links the BBC music staff afforded her to other departments within the corporation. Having returned from London to Barry on 25 February 1947 after a brief period working for the Schools Broadcasting Department, she was ideally qualified to work for its Welsh equivalent, beginning with 'Welsh Children's Hour' in late 1948.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the scarcity of abstract compositions between 1948 and 1954 (*The Dancers*, *Violin Concerto*, *Three Nocturnes* and a few songs notwithstanding) and the lack of a full-time position elsewhere imply that the BBC represented Williams's primary source of income during the period.<sup>78</sup> It is surely no exaggeration to suggest that without it, non-functional composition of any kind would simply have been too time-consumingly expensive to contemplate. Regardless of her many contemporary frustrations, therefore, Williams's relationship with the BBC Welsh Region was becoming one of near-dependency.

Despite Williams's own financial plight, the welfare of Wales's radio audiences remained prominent amongst her concerns. Although her unaccepted offer of a series of talks aiming 'to throw a spotlight on to bits of music where the composer's genius is at its brightest' was unlikely to have been purely altruistic, she justified her approach by appointing herself representative-in-chief of musical Wales.<sup>79</sup> In response to the BBC's Head of Welsh Programmes's assertion that '[Wales's] musical situation, alas, provides a good illustration of how little you can depend on the amateur when his enthusiasm has waned', Williams took the

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76 One might compare the relative restraint of Williams's criticisms with those of Plaid Cymru's Gwynfor Evans, for example. For a brief introduction to the early days of this long-running argument, see Jamie Medhurst, 'Minorities with a Message: The Beveridge Report on Broadcasting (1949-1951) and Wales', *Twentieth Century British History*, XIX:2 (2008), pp. 217-233.

77 The most notable of the non-Welsh children's programmes for which Williams wrote scripts and arranged music was probably 'Rhythm and Melody' (which, although also broadcast from London, was produced in Cardiff and featured recordings by the BBC Welsh Orchestra), but also 'Adventures in Music' and other, less long-running series. Although programmes from London represented a significant proportion of her income beyond composing, the commissions from Cardiff were no mere supplement but an essential contribution to her living expenses.

78 Aside from the aforementioned works and arrangements of traditional music for children, Williams composed scores for a number of films during these years, notably *Blue Scar* (1948), *David* (1951), and *The Story of Achievement* (1952). Despite the scale of *The Merry Minstrel* (1949) – an introduction for children to the instruments of the orchestra after the fairy tale by the brothers Grimm – she still considered it to be 'utility music'; see her letter to Mansel Thomas, [undated] February 1950 (BBC WAC, D).

79 The proposed talks, provisionally entitled 'Composer's Craft', were to have been given in collaboration with Daniel Jones; see Grace Williams, letter to Elwyn Evans, 17 September 1948 (BBC WAC, S).

providers of her limited income to task without hesitation.<sup>80</sup> 'Audiences are musically uneducated through no fault of their own. What do you do to help them?', she challenged, and 'surely it isn't hard to imagine what the B.B.C. could do for Welsh music if it had the will to do so?'<sup>81</sup> Only one facet of the station's output was left unscathed by her tirade:

I exempt from all my criticisms one department: Children's Hour. There's more vision + enterprise in that department with regard to music than – well – just examine the facts.<sup>82</sup>

This exemption suggests a particularly lingering resentment towards the Music Department staff who, in failing to programme her works, stood accused of ignoring forward-thinking Welsh musicians in favour of a general output so limited in scope as to be patronising. Williams considered their programmes to be so over-simplified, in fact, that Welsh children (under her guidance) were getting a far more thorough musical education than their parents.

If Williams's assessment is considered to be accurate, the BBC's lack of offers of performances during 1948-49 was the fault of Idris Lewis, whose conservative views on contemporary music contrasted strongly with those of Mansel Thomas to the detriment of a uniform policy for Welsh composers.<sup>83</sup> Lewis's retirement at sixty had been due in 1949 but, in September of that year, Williams 'read the sad news ... that Idris has wangled another year for himself.'<sup>84</sup> One of his final acts as Head of Welsh Music, however, was to arrange the premieres of Williams's new Violin Concerto and *Symphonic Impressions* for 30 March 1950.<sup>85</sup> Despite this scheduling of her most significant broadcast for several years, Williams preferred to concentrate upon Lewis's general approach to programming that had contributed to her growing belief that '[l]isteners

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80 Alun Watkin Jones, 'So far, so good?', *Radio Times* (Welsh Edition), CII:1324 (25 February 1949), p. 15.

81 Grace Williams, letter to Alun Watkin Jones, 24 February 1949 (BBC WAC, D). Watkin Jones's response, suggested that she call in 'any time you feel like blowing off more steam' and asked her to consider 'not what the BBC could do for Welsh music, but rather what Welsh musicians could do for the BBC'; see his letter to Grace Williams, 4 March 1949 (BBC WAC, D).

82 Grace Williams, letter to Alun Watkin Jones, 24 February 1949 (BBC WAC, D).

83 This inflighting had allegedly become openly displayed by the late 1940s: '[Lewis] also reminded me in full force that he, Idris, had been working for Welsh music for years, + had not got any credit for it + now all the praise is being lavished on Mansel ... it has made Idris so jealous he's given M[ansel]. nothing but sour looks for months.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 10 September 1948 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1405).

84 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued); to which is appended the sarcastic note 'Salary raised to £1200.'

85 Williams alleged that Lewis's actions were hardly motivated by genuine enthusiasm in her letters to Daniel Jones, [undated] February 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1410) and Enid Parry, 8 October 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued): 'During the war, when Idris had no orchestra, he was very keenly interested – then – I was a bad girl – so he forgot it. A few months ago I happened to praise the Children's Hour lovely performance of Bastien + Bastienne (Which he happened to conduct ... ) – well he purred, + said: "By the way – we must do something of yours again soon. What have you got?" "My symphony" Lunga pausa. – Then he said – weakly – "Haven't we ever done that?" – +, well, he isn't imaginative enough to think up a good excuse on the spur of the moment – so he was cornered.'

have got it into their heads that all I can do is folk-song fantasias.<sup>86</sup> Such an impression was evidently not confined to Wales either, for the first suggestion of the producers of 'Woman's Hour' upon inviting Williams to contribute to a programme was 'a talk showing how you have used Welsh folk tunes in some of your compositions'.<sup>87</sup> Whilst a wholly reasonable proposition, its immediate selection in preference to other, equally promising topics – including the more immediate relevance of her position as one of the few professional female composers working in Britain – is notable.

The appointment of Mansel Thomas to the Head of Welsh Music role vacated upon Idris Lewis's eventual retirement in 1950 represented, for Williams, a mixed blessing. Her relationship with Lewis had deteriorated to such an extent that he had not had any further involvement in her *Symphonic Impressions*/Violin Concerto programme, and her final letter to him before his departure reads solely:

Dear Idris,  
Thank you for your congratulations [on the broadcast.]  
Yours sincerely  
Grace Williams<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, in arranging a meeting with Kenneth Wright shortly afterwards, she suggested that the 'agenda had better be Wales – its potentialities, its smugness + the defeatism of Idris Lewis'.<sup>89</sup> Whilst acknowledging the vital role Lewis's department had played in keeping her composing career at least semi-sustainable, Williams still felt able to claim that the lack of ambitious programming could be directly attributed to his misplaced understanding of audiences' abilities:

I can't help feeling that the lack of culture [broadcast on the Welsh Region] has in many ways suited Idris – he has kept on doping Wales with popular ballad programmes (most of them arranged by [himself]) + that really is his line .... At the same time he has done his duty by including Welsh composers['] works in the programmes. The Welsh Region has meant everything to the likes of me;

86 '+ I don't blame them because that's all they ever hear from me these days'; see Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, [postmark] 2 December 1949 (BBC WAC, *D*). Lewis had recently selected both *Fantasia* and *Hen Walia* for inclusion in a concert for an audience of members of the Cardiff Cymmrodorion Society: although he was later happy to replace one of them with two of the *Rhiannon* movements, his default preference for traditional medleys is notable; see his letter to Grace Williams, 29 November 1949 (BBC WAC, *D*).

87 Anthony Derville, letter to Grace Williams, 29 November 1949 (BBC WAC, *Q*). The invitation had seemingly sprung from Williams's impromptu offer of a new 'Woman's Hour' signature tune; see her letter to Evelyn Gibbs, 9 November 1949 (BBC WAC, *Q*). The manuscript has not survived.

88 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 7 April 1950 (BBC WAC, *D*). Williams's relationship with Mansel Thomas would occasionally become just as tumultuous as it had been with Lewis, though the long-term prognosis was inevitably better; see, for example, her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] July 1953 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued): 'Wales – thanks to Mansel [–] has now downgraded me + I get nothing except a few broadcasts from Arwel Hughes – last week a D.Mus. was allowed to broadcast a talk on Welsh composers .... I was referred to simply as composer of *Fantasia* on Welsh Nursery Rhymes'.

89 '[...] aided + abetted by the arch-defeatist Head of Programmes [Alun] Watcyn [*sic.*] Jones'; see her letter to Kenneth Wright, 12 April 1950 (BBC WAC, *I*) and pp. 53-54 above.

without it we should have gone under long ago.<sup>90</sup>

In replacing him with Mansel Thomas, however, the BBC Welsh Orchestra required a new conductor and soon selected Rae Jenkins: a musician instantly recognisable to audiences because of his association with the highly popular, Bangor-based radio show 'ITMA'.<sup>91</sup> Jenkins proved far less sympathetic towards Williams's cause and, no doubt, general character than his predecessor and, within a matter of months, she had concluded that 'I really don't want to work on anything which involves taking orders from R.J.'<sup>92</sup>

Without a Cardiff-based BBC conductor well-disposed towards her, Williams found herself without an easily available outlet for performances of her work in Wales in the early 1950s.<sup>93</sup> Concerts of some significance did take place elsewhere, but financial pressures forced Williams to prioritise other outlets by continuing to write music and scripts for children's programmes, teaching at the Cardiff College of Music and composing for film.<sup>94</sup> In addition to the inevitable impact upon her self-confidence, she feared that this regressive trend was beginning to truly mislead the listening public and that her reputation was suffering as a result. Of the BBC Welsh Region staff, she asked that 'with regard to commissions perhaps music dept. will someday remember that I am also a composer';<sup>95</sup> and, when considering submitting her hornpipe *Keel and Anchor* and equally lightweight *Seven Scenes for Young Listeners* to the BBC reading panel, she mourned:

I do realise that when people see my name attached to folk song arrangements and fantasias for children it is so easy for them to forget that I also write full scale serious works. If only I had no desire to write seriously I should be a much happier person – but there it is, most of my composing time has been spent on serious works. Perhaps I am wrong in feeling that they mean a good bit more than my lighter things. It's all very difficult.<sup>96</sup>

90 *Ibid.*

91 'It's that man again': for a brief biography of Jenkins, see Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31.

92 Grace Williams, letter to J. Alwyn Jones, 15 January 1951 (BBC WAC, D). J. Glynne Evans, in personal correspondence with the present writer (18 October 2006), noted 'Rae Jenkins had little time for her' and it is alleged that he had BBC security staff bar her entirely from recording sessions (personal correspondence between Christopher Painter and the present writer based on the reminiscences of Alun Francis, March 2010).

93 Williams's work was hardly completely absent from Cardiff programmes: *Symphonic Impressions* was played in September 1952, for example (under Arwel Hughes, notably), and *Fantasia* maintained its near-ubiquitous presence despite Williams being 'pretty sick of not being recognised by my own country as a composer of serious music'; see her letter to Mansel Thomas, 5 June 1952 (BBC WAC, D).

94 Notable in this regard are the performances of *Sea Sketches* in Germany by the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra (under Paul Schwob in April 1951); the broadcast by the BBC Scottish Orchestra of *Symphonic Impressions* (Clarence Raybould; April 1952); and repeated BBC recordings of the Violin Concerto. In 1954, an unnamed orchestra and conductor were also touring *Fantasia* around central Europe; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 23 November 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

95 Grace Williams, letter to J. Alwyn Jones, 10 November 1953 (BBC WAC, D).

96 Grace Williams, letter to R.J.F. Howgill, 20 September 1954 (BBC WAC, D). Williams was by no means, however, above accepting programming of *Fantasia* if nothing else was being considered: 'Naturally I don't want to miss a basic [i.e. not Welsh Region] broadcast – it means a lot to me financially as well as otherwise

Three significant events in particular forced (or, in the third case, perhaps gently encouraged) Williams's hand in her return to 'serious' composition after 1954. The first was the BBC production of Saunders Lewis's play *Siwan*, for which she had been commissioned to write incidental music at very short notice and without a copy of the script. Whilst the circumstances of composition were thus not ideal, Williams's strongly worded post-broadcast complaints primarily concerned the Drama Department's manipulation of her music and, in particular, the insertion into the programme of music not written by her without amending the closing credits.<sup>97</sup> This mis-attribution, indeed, may well have contributed to her not writing any further such incidental music for the BBC until 1970 (to Saunders Lewis's *Esther*).<sup>98</sup> Secondly, the summer of 1954 saw the end of her eight-year involvement with 'Rhythm and Melody', which had provided Williams with welcome income but occupied a great deal of her time.<sup>99</sup> More positive, however, was the third notable event of the year: the first performance, on 18 November, of *The Dancers* (1951) representing the first premiere of a substantial Williams work since 1950.<sup>100</sup> Although this success could never have brought financial compensation for the demise of 'Rhythm and Melody', and failed to dissuade Williams from seeking full-time copyist's work, the return of her original music to Cardiff programming cannot have left her entirely disconsolate.

### 1954-77: Success vs. Intimacy

Although 1955 saw the completion of two of Williams's most enduringly popular works (*Penillion* and *Carol Nadolig*) and the beginnings of one of her most significant (Symphony No. 2), the BBC's direct input into each of the aforementioned was negligible. Nevertheless, the continuing willingness of its staff to subsidise her composing career by supplying relatively lucrative means of alternative employment permitted her greater time for free creativity. Her recruitment as an assessor in March 1955 – a role that involved writing reports on artists and amateur groups wishing to be broadcast – granted her the flexible working hours and promise

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(consequently I am grateful to you for including it'); see her letter to Mansel Thomas, 15 July 1952 (BBC WAC, D).

97 When Williams's comments concerning the editing of her scripts are added to her wish to be at rehearsals of her work whenever possible, there is compelling evidence for the theory that Williams felt (no doubt sometimes irrationally) unable to trust completely many of those with whom she dealt; see her letters to Alun Oldfield-Davies, 5 March 1954 and Dafydd Gruffydd, 10 March 1954 (BBC WAC, E).

98 The suspicion that the BBC Drama Department consciously decided not to engage her again because of the vociferous nature of her comments can also hardly be discounted.

99 It is not immediately clear what brought Williams's involvement with 'Rhythm and Melody' to an end, but the separation appears to have been amicable; see her letter to Gwyneth Petty, 8 August 1954 (BBC WAC, Q).

100 The premiere was given by the Penarth Ladies Choir, BBC Welsh Orchestra and Joan Sutherland (already well known for her opera singing and one of the most famous names ever associated with a Williams work) under Arwel Hughes, and it should be noted that over three years had elapsed since its actual completion.

of a stable income necessary for composing to be anything other than a part-time occupation.<sup>101</sup> Although less financially significant, the Welsh-language programme 'Cerddi Cymru' also supplied regular folk song-arranging and script-writing work following its launch in 1957. As an outlet for wide dissemination of her compositions, however, she remained heavily reliant on the Welsh Region, noting that she had decided to transfer publishing and hire rights to a number of scores to Oxford University Press solely because 'they are works for which Welsh Home Service seems to have no use.'<sup>102</sup> Despite OUP's international remit, and the potential for more commercial collaboration, Williams evidently considered the BBC in Cardiff to remain best placed to effectively promote her works.

For all Williams's reliance on regional broadcasting, the most significant event concerning her relationship with the BBC during 1957-58 took place at a UK-wide level. Perhaps influenced by the successful staging of *Penillion* on the Third Programme (19 April 1956<sup>103</sup>), but certainly by the advocacy of Alan Frank at OUP's Music Department, the organisers of the 1958 BBC Proms initially selected *Fantasia* for inclusion alongside Dvořák's Symphony No. 9, Violin Concerto and *Carnival*.<sup>104</sup> Despite this very public recognition of her work, Williams could only 'feel really desperately sad ... a first Prom – at my age – + that old work.'<sup>105</sup> Feeling unable to press for an alternative herself, she turned to Mansel Thomas to work on her behalf, who successfully persuaded Maurice Johnstone to agree to schedule *Penillion* in *Fantasia*'s place.<sup>106</sup> For critical notice, the choice was vital, for *Fantasia* could hardly have created the 'impression ... of a direct and striking freshness – almost originality' displayed by the later work.<sup>107</sup>

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101 Williams accepted the post on 18 March 1955; see her letter of that date to J. Alwyn Jones (BBC WAC, *E*). The terms of reference of Williams's initial employment have not survived, but the work would continue long into the 1960s.

102 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 6 February 1956 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

103 This concert of Welsh works was, according to Peter Crossley-Holland, 'a realisation of a hope that I have had for many years'; see his letter to Grace Williams, 24 April 1956 (BBC WAC, *I*). The review in *The Times* considered it to be the ultimate fulfilment of the work of Walford Davies (anon., 'Welsh Music', 20 April 1956, p. 3).

104 Williams, who knew Frank personally through having previously requested and received copying work from him when short of other employment, recounted his actions in her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 10 March 1957 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The Prom was given by the London Symphony Orchestra and Basil Cameron, and also featured Franck's *Le Chasseur Maudit* and Ravel's *Tzigane*.

105 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 10 March 1957 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

106 Johnstone, the BBC's London-based Head of Music Programmes, was probably unaware of much of Williams's output but 'remembered he'd heard my *Penillion* + liked it'; see *ibid.*

107 Anon., 'A Welsh Novelty', *The Times*, 14 August 1958, p. 12. The concert was not one of the series selected by the BBC for broadcast.

Despite the close, if sometimes fractious relationships developed between Williams and BBC Welsh Region staff between 1931 and 1958 and the benefits to each already recounted, the most telling method of linking broadcaster and performer to composer had yet to be fully realised. There can be no closer bond than that of the principle of commission – an implicit recognition that the talent of one party is worth financial outlay by the other – but these twenty-seven years had produced only one: *Rhiannon*.<sup>108</sup> The ten years following the Proms performance, however, would elicit a further six such offers. If the first, *All Seasons shall be Sweet* (1959), could be tentatively linked to the recent success of Williams's Proms premiere and the second, a refused commission for an orchestral overture, had no discernible occasion in mind, the remaining four can each be linked to defining moments in the BBC's history of promoting Welsh music.<sup>109</sup> This is especially apparent in the third commission: Williams's contribution to the BBC's Festival of Welsh Music of 1962-63, which also served to celebrate their twenty-five year occupancy of the Park Place studios. In commissioning a 'setting of Welsh words in penillion form for voice and harp', the BBC announced a partial renewal of its strategy to link its commissions directly with their country of origin and encouraged Williams to return to medieval Welsh poetry for the first time since 1939's *Gogonedawg Arglwydd*.<sup>110</sup> Having been able to spectacularly realise her potential for writing large-scale dramatic music in *The Parlour*, Williams relished the intimacy of *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems* (1962): 'I loved doing these songs + sang + played them to Mansel last week + he was quite bowled over by them.'<sup>111</sup> The premiere, on 5 February 1963, left her 'singing them all the week-end' despite her belief that 'there can be no more disheartening words' than the 'very nice' from BBC staff.<sup>112</sup>

With neither the Trumpet Concerto (1963) nor *Benedicite* (1964) providing substantial financial

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108 The stress caused to both parties by the other in this case (see pp. 45-48 above) no doubt contributed to the absence of further development along such lines. The BBC's numerous commissions of children's arrangements, scripts and incidental music can hardly be considered to be of similar stature.

109 The loss of the vast majority of any Williams-BBC Wales correspondence after 1956 makes the exact dating of events difficult, and accounts for the less strictly chronological ordering of this final section of Chapter II. R[?]. Walford's letter to Williams of 12 May 1959 (BBC WAC, L) implies that she and Mansel Thomas had been discussing the commission of *All Seasons* for some time, albeit surely not the six months separating it from the 1958 Prom. The only mention of the overture commission occurs in a letter from Mansel Thomas of 25 May 1961 (BBC WAC, V): its impending deadline of 31 August and the heavy workload of completing *The Parlour* no doubt explain Williams's lack of acceptance.

110 Dorothy Ross, letter to Grace Williams, 21 June 1962 (BBC WAC, L). Speculation about the BBC's motivation has already been discussed in relation to *Rhiannon*; see above, pp. 45-46. Whilst the original terms of the commission specified only voice and harp, Williams discussed the possibility of expanding the ensemble and considered horn and trumpet; oboe and viola; and a second harp or lute before settling on harpsichord; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 24 July 1962 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1457).

111 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 21 September 1962 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1458).

112 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 25 February 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1469). The premiere had been given by Helen Watts, Osian Ellis and an unnamed harpsichordist.



recompense for temporal outlay, Williams remained heavily reliant on the BBC for freelance work throughout the early 1960s, especially its London-based Schools Broadcasting Department.<sup>113</sup> Although there was no outpouring of commissions from the Welsh Region, this might be better considered as a recognition that Williams's generally increasing stature in British music meant that her commissioning might best be kept for special occasions, rather than as evidence of any lack of commitment. One might speculate that this distinction meant little to Williams, however, whose prime concern continued to be that she should be represented on air as an active contemporary composer rather than as a relic of the past. In contrast, broadcast selections from Williams's output frequently remained confined to works a decade or more out of date: the inclusion of *Penillion* and *Fantasia* (contrasted with Spanish-inflected pieces) in a series of programmes given by Cuban conductor Alberto Bolet is but one example.<sup>114</sup> The commissioning of *Carillons* (1965) for the television programme 'Auditorium' might, however, represent an important exception to the rule, despite its premiere being delayed until St David's Day 1967 to mark the official opening of the BBC's new studios at Llandaff.<sup>115</sup>

Without doubt the most auspicious commissions of all those proffered by the Welsh BBC during the 1960s were the final two: Williams's contribution to the *Severn Bridge Variations* and the invitation to set Thomas Parry's play *Llywelyn Fawr* ('Llywelyn the Great') to celebrate the Investiture of the Prince of Wales. The latter is simply recounted in her own words:

Arwel H. wrote offering me the big B.B.C. Music commission for Inv[estiture]. week: £225 for a 50 minutes' dramatic choral + orch. work. He mentioned that the Head of Programmes suggested I base it on ... [Llywelyn Fawr]. I'd been told the play was very heavy going + I know Tom is a scholar + not a dramatist – so I feared the worst. However, I read it – + indeed it wouldn't do at all. Interesting to read as history but as drama – no – + in any case one could never sing the lines ... A[rwel]. begged me to change my mind – but I couldn't possibly – so that's that.<sup>116</sup>

Having turned down such a substantial commission, Williams felt able to retrospectively justify her decision when BBC Radio 3 chose to interrupt its live coverage of the Investiture to play forty-five minutes of records. These featured only one 'Welsh' work, Edward German's *Welsh*

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113 '[I] am getting B.B.C. jobs (the fees of which I need) + can't risk turning them down'; Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 16 October 1964 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

114 Williams complained that 'I wish he were doing the Trpt. Concerto instead' and claimed that the BBC 'seem to have forgotten about their promise to do that'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 March 1965 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

115 The Trumpet Concerto had been televised in January 1965, and the BBC had also requested new works from Robert Smith and William Mathias for this new series; see R. Walford, letter to R.A. Sweetman, 9 August 1965 (BBC WAC, *M*) and the postscript to this chapter, pp. 65-66.

116 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 June 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Williams suggested her recently begun *Missa Cambrensis* as an alternative but, despite the support of Arwel Hughes for the idea, the Head of Programmes was adamant that Parry's play be used.

*Rhapsody*, demonstrating a practice Williams considered entirely symptomatic of the BBC's popular conservatism concerning Welsh music.<sup>117</sup> However, an unusual collaborative project between the BBC and composers from Wales and England was first mooted in August 1966: a celebration of the opening of the Severn Bridge in the form of six variations on the Welsh hymn tune 'Braint'.<sup>118</sup> Although many of Williams's own preferences and suggestions were ignored – including her belief that the suite ought to reflect the industrial 'sounds of hammering, welding, sizzling, [and] clanging'<sup>119</sup> – her eventual conclusion that her chorale prelude was largely born of the Aberfan colliery disaster left her un-inclined to criticise the work.<sup>120</sup> First performed on 11 January 1967 by the BBC Training Orchestra and Adrian Boult, it later became the second and last of her works to be performed at the BBC Proms during her lifetime.<sup>121</sup>

The comparative scarcity of BBC Wales commissions during the last years of Williams's life cannot entirely be attributed to any change in policy on the Corporation's behalf for, by 1975, she had 'told them I wasn't taking any more commissions' and was instead 'agitating for more performances ... for up + coming Welsh composers'.<sup>122</sup> The refusal to accept the offer of £175 for a Violin Sonata in 1970 can probably be explained by Williams's engrossment in *Missa Cambrensis* and oft-expressed aversion to writing chamber music; her rejection of a similar offer two years later for less than half the fee (£80) is similarly unsurprising.<sup>123</sup> *Fairest of Stars*, whilst BBC-funded, was the brainchild of the Welsh Arts Council, thus only Williams's last

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117 'Welsh Rhapsody took precedence over Welsh music fresh from the mint. We can't forgive them for that.' Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 5 July 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The BBC's television coverage also cut Williams's eventual, independent contribution to the Investiture celebrations – *Castell Caernarfon*, discussed in Chapter I of this thesis – down to only a few minutes in the background of commentary before the cameras in any case diverted elsewhere.

118 Williams's recollections elicit some interesting asides: that the notion of a theme and variations was not a precondition, for example, and that Richard Rodney Bennett and William Mathias were originally approached ahead of Nicholas Maw and Alun Hoddinott; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 19 August 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1491).

119 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] September 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1492). Williams also questioned 'what on earth has Braint to do with the celebration of an engineering feat'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 29 September 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1494).

120 'I found myself scrapping all I'd done on it as being too complicated + cerebral – + suddenly getting this simple approach .... I feel now that if I'd had to write a piece in memory of Aberfan it would have been like this.' Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 24 October 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1496); see also her letter to Vivien Cutting, 3 November 1966 (cited in Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 76: the original Williams-Cutting correspondence now seems to have been lost).

121 Boris Brott conducted the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra in a concert of 20 July 1976 that also featured Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 and Dvořák's Symphony No. 8. Since William's death in 1977, only *Ballads* and *Sea Sketches* have featured at the Proms, in each case performed by an incarnation of the BBC's Welsh orchestra: the former in 1978 under Boris Brott and the latter in 1991 and 2008 under Tadaaki Otaka.

122 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 23 April 1975 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

123 Arwel Hughes, letter to Grace Williams, 16 June 1970 (BBC WAC, N); J. Alwyn Jones, letter to Grace Williams, 23 November 1972 (BBC WAC, N). Neither of Williams's responses have survived.

completed work – the linked choruses *Harp Song of the Dane Women* and *To Sea! To Sea!* – can be wholly described as a fulfilled BBC commission of the 1970s.<sup>124</sup> Even had Williams lived for longer than her sixteen remaining months, the Corporation's rigid insistence on scheduling a new work in favour of *Ave Maris Stella* – a policy Williams considered to be 'so stupid' – may in any case have made future refusals absolute.<sup>125</sup> Her resultant conclusion that the BBC 'weren't interested in anything except a first performance' accompanied a belief that the publicity and status afforded to a new commission had become of greater import than promoting her as a composer for her own sake.<sup>126</sup>

Arwel Hughes's retirement from the Head of Music position in 1971 (six years after his inheritance of the headship from Mansel Thomas; see below) brought an end to forty years of close contact between Williams and BBC staff in Llandaff. By the close of 1972, the music management team of Arnold Lewis, Moelfryn Harries and Boris Brott contained no-one with whom she had previously collaborated to any great extent. As BBC Radio 3 gradually assumed the mantle of primary responsibility for classical music programming from regional radio stations, Williams's contribution to BBC Wales declined accordingly.<sup>127</sup> That there was still limited contact is evident in the aforementioned commissioning of *Fairest of Stars* and *Harp Song of the Dane Women/To Sea! To Sea!*, and Williams clearly felt she knew Harries well enough to opine that 'he isn't very reliable – forgets very easily + twists things round.'<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, her seventieth birthday was celebrated with the first performance of the newly-revised Symphony No. 2, given by Christopher Adey and the BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra,<sup>129</sup> and an offer to use the orchestra's library to house her scores and associated performance material.<sup>130</sup> These anniversary festivities were further supported by broadcasts

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124 Indeed, the primary contribution of BBC staff to *Fairest of Stars* was to nearly prevent its recording by failing to arrange the copying of the instrumental parts sufficiently quickly; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 30 November 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

125 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 25 October 1975 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

126 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 23 April 1975 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

127 Even at this late stage, Williams found national broadcasts intimidating: her fear that *Ballads* 'isn't, after all, good enough for R[adio]. 3' came despite it having been performed live three times in Wales during the preceding two years; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] December 1970 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

128 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 26 October 1972 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). It is to be hoped that Williams had not contributed overmuch to Harries's having been 'on long sick leave due to nervous exhaustion'. (*Ibid.*)

129 The 1973 expansion of the BBC Welsh Orchestra into its sixty-strong symphonic namesake came too late to be of any significance to Williams's composing career: following 1971's *Missa Cambrensis*, only *Fairest of Stars* used an orchestra.

130 Williams attributed the former event to being 'all due to one [unnamed] member of music staff'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 February 1976 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). J. Alwyn Jones,

arranged by the BBC in London of talks for 'Woman's Hour' and 'Composer's Portrait', each looking back on her composing career.<sup>131</sup> Finally, Williams's memorial concert (14 December 1977), given under Vernon Handley less than two years after her birthday celebrations, supplemented the symphony with *Fantasia*, *Carillons*, the Trumpet Concerto and the only performance ever given of *Gogonedawg Argwlydd* in its original Welsh.

### **Summary: half a century in a unique position**

The significance of Grace Williams's relationship with the BBC and its staff, spread across the best part of fifty years, is scarcely comparable with the often fragmented series of short-term contacts described in Chapter I of the present work. Although this distinction was no doubt born partly out of necessity – no other institution reached so many people or provided so many opportunities for employment – its maintenance is still remarkable given the ease with which Williams would break off contacts elsewhere if she felt that her principles were being compromised. Perhaps unlike the majority of these other relationships, however, at the inception of this one both protagonists had had much to gain and little to lose. Williams, as an emerging but inexperienced composer, found that her nationality gave her the simplest of introductions into the world of broadcasting; the BBC, for their part, had a composer of high quality and accessible works who could be indisputably and inextricably linked with their home region. As the 1930s progressed, however, matters became strained and frustrations more evident, with the pace of progress slowed by orchestral limitations and a musical programming priority skewed towards the far end of John Reith's radio ethic of 'inform, educate and entertain.'<sup>132</sup> The prominence of *Hen Walia* – a relatively short, lightweight and folk song-heavy work – in broadcasts of this period is telling; the scarcity of performances of the *Suite for Nine Instruments* and *Elegy* equally so. Indeed, one can speculate whether, in closing the decade by commissioning a 'suite on some Welsh subject', the BBC were in fact anticipating a further work laden with folk song whose popularity would be unquestionable.<sup>133</sup>

The fifteen-year period (1939-54) separating the first performances of *Rhiannon* and *The Dancers* had likewise encompassed considerable upheaval both for Williams and her BBC contacts. At its conclusion, there had been a tentative renewal of a relationship that

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probably the longest-serving member of music staff, may well have been the proponent. The exact date of the recording cannot be ascertained.

131 Williams's annotated copy of her script for 'Composer's Portrait' is held by the Welsh Music Information Centre, Cardiff (uncatalogued).

132 This mission statement – words first spoken in 1922 – is still enshrined in the BBC's current Royal Charter.

133 J.G. Roberts, letter to Grace Williams, 2 January 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

acknowledged serious, original composition as her primary means of artistic expression. Williams's sense of lingering resentment concerning BBC priorities had not been entirely banished, but there was at least a recognition that a long drought had ended.<sup>134</sup> Whilst the decline in demand for children's music had had considerable financial impact upon her, the resulting free time was sure to permit more creative freedom in the coming years, should her public reputation begin to be suitably re-established through broadcasting. Relationships with BBC staff had been forged and soured but, with Mansel Thomas at the helm and Arwel Hughes able to conduct the BBC Welsh Orchestra on occasion – both men ambitious composers in their own right – there was justifiably greater optimism for the cause of Welsh contemporary music in general and Williams in particular.

Any anticipated continuation of the intimacy between composer, Welsh BBC staff, and the orchestra to which both had contributed throughout the 1930s, '40s and '50s would, however, perceptively diminish during the 1960s and become all but negligible by the 1970s. In attempting to explain this transition, the effects of far wider-reaching changes at the very heart of the BBC cannot be ignored, with the year 1965 particularly significant both for Williams and the Cardiff station. This date marked a major upheaval for both parties, with the retirement of Rae Jenkins from the conductorship of the BBC Welsh Orchestra and, crucially, Mansel Thomas as Head of Music. Although Williams had continued to maintain that Jenkins 'isn't a bit interested in bloody Welsh composers',<sup>135</sup> he at least possessed an awareness of his countrymen's activities that was unlikely to have been immediately shared by his replacement, John Carewe, whilst the international flavour was substantiated still further by Boris Brott's 1972 employment as Carewe's successor.<sup>136</sup> Peter Reynolds interprets the former appointment in particular as a result of the determination of William Glock, BBC national Music Controller, to impose himself on regional broadcasting: a new departure from the traditional model of promoting from within Wales.<sup>137</sup> This policy of centralisation was later made explicitly relevant

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134 Williams continued to complain that with 'the exception of Dan [Jones] and Arwel [Hughes] (+ the Hon. Mervyn [Burtch?]) Welsh composers aren't getting anything like the encouragement they used to have'; see her letter to J. Alwyn Jones, 9 November 1954 (BBC WAC, E).

135 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 18 November 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1417).

136 Carewe's lifelong commitment to modern music was well known, however, and he would come to champion works by Wales's contemporary composers; found the series 'Musica Viva'; and conduct Williams's Symphony No. 2 in four of its nine performances before her death (during the period 1969-73; for full details, see the appendix to the present writer's MPhil thesis, *op. cit.*, and Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 32). On Brott's appointment, Williams observed that 'After all the hot tips ... this man came in from the cold, unknown to anyone except the selection committee ... No one seems to have a clue as to how, why, he got the job'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 12 June 1972 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

137 Reynolds, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32. No such departure was, however, applied to Arwel Hughes, who took over as Head of Music.

to the BBC's orchestras in two reports: *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (1969) and *The Report on the Orchestra Resources of the United Kingdom* (1970).<sup>138</sup>

It is perhaps of no surprise, therefore, that Williams believed that the Welsh BBC's programming was becoming increasingly beholden to the whims of London. If her assessment is accurate, this development was hardly likely to benefit her or other composers writing the comparatively traditional scores out of favour with Glock:

I cannot see that the much boosted Music Programme is doing anyone much good – except the Birtwistles (what an apt name) + Goehrs (apter!) (I must say I loved Walton's recent remark “There's the Manchester School – + the L'v'pool School – + of the two I think I prefer the L'v'pool.”) ... I think it's up to us to keep reminding Welsh Music Dept. of our existence. It's the easiest thing in the world for them to forget all about us + simply carry out London's instructions.<sup>139</sup>

Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether Williams's resentment of BBC practice was targeted more at Cardiff than London or vice versa. Indeed, her observation that 'Llandaff prefers [*sic.*] their programmes to be rooted (their word!) in London because then London pays for them' could be considered to be either a criticism of, or display of empathy with Arwel Hughes and his colleagues.<sup>140</sup> In either scenario, her distinct preference for building constructive professional relationships with those outside the musical mainstream (as already identified in Chapter I) is also evident here, with Williams still opting to lobby Cardiff rather than London at every turn. Tellingly, however, her remark that BBC Wales 'seem to think they have an obligation to Welsh composers', whilst delivered in passing and hardly a fair acknowledgement of the commissions she had recently received, ably illustrates that even their relationship had changed from one born of mutual support to something now more reliant on a sense of duty.<sup>141</sup>

### **Postscript: Grace Williams and Welsh Television**

This chapter has concerned itself almost entirely with radio, and with good reason: it was easily the primary means of broadcasting classical music to Wales throughout Williams's composing life.<sup>142</sup> Referring to the BBC at UK level, Davies notes that '[b]y the 1950s, music represented

138 British Broadcasting Corporation, *Broadcasting in the Seventies* (London: BBC, 1969) and *The Report on the Orchestra Resources of the United Kingdom* (London: BBC, 1970). A detailed accounts of the impact Glock's planned reforms had on the BBC Welsh Orchestra can be found in Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 304-306.

139 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 8 March 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1485).

140 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark] 6 April 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

141 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Though taken out of context – Williams was noting that BBC Wales seemed to feel unable to programme non-native contemporary works without consulting London – this comment remains significant.

142 Williams did not own a television until 1954, and then only having purchased it as a gift for her mother; see

40 per cent of the BBC's sound transmissions, a marked contrast with its television service, on which musical programmes, strictly defined, constituted less than 5 per cent'.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, the significance of Wales being granted its own wavelength for television broadcasting in 1964 could not have been lost on Williams and, indeed, she would come to contribute occasional material to it.<sup>144</sup> Three events in particular are worthy of note: the recording of Williams's Trumpet Concerto for 'Auditorium' on 13 December 1964; the commissioning of *Carillons* for the same programme the following year; and the televising of *The Parlour* to celebrate St David's Day in 1968.<sup>145</sup> Details concerning this last event are frustratingly scarce, but Williams attributed it to the generosity of BBC staff in Cardiff, who sympathised with her lack of success in agreeing a topic for a new opera with the London-based producer Cedric Messina.<sup>146</sup> Williams's surviving comments relating to these broadcasts focus primarily on their standards of performance, but she would later focus on television's potential as a means of entertainment and education, stating: 'I've felt for ages that T.V. will eventually revolutionise teaching'.<sup>147</sup>

Given such the talent for writing dramatic music of wide appeal evident in Williams's film scores of the 1940s and '50s and, especially, *The Parlour*, it would seem unfortunate that she did not build on her successful career in writing scores for stage and silver screen by contributing more to Welsh television programming. Her own life was not celebrated in the same medium until after her death, and Vincent Dowdall's 1981 documentary 'Memories of Grace' remains the only feature-length television programme to have been produced on the subject of one of Wales's finest composers and her contribution to its cultural heritage.

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her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [received] July 1953 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

143 Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

144 Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 273. The launch of BBC Wales, on 9 February 1964, granted Wales a position far more independent in broadcast terms than Scotland or Northern Ireland. Williams's sole involvement with television prior to this date had been the writing of the signature tune for the children's programme 'Telewele'.

145 The Trumpet Concerto was performed by its commissioner, Bram Gay, under Adrian Boult and was broadcast in January 1965.

146 'The Cardiff music staff have been all over me lately – I think they feel T.V. Centre has let me down + they want to make up for it as best they can.' Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 24 August 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The lack of surviving letters between Williams and the BBC and the incomplete nature of the BBC's own broadcast archives for this period render cataloguing the details of this performance all but impossible. It certainly was not performed during the week of St David's Day itself, despite the Welsh BBC holding a week of festivities to celebrate the occasion; see Arwel Hughes, 'Festival of Music', *Radio Times* (Wales Edition), CLXXVIII:2311 (22 February 1968), p. 2.

147 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 30 November 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). More broadly, Williams wrote: 'I couldn't bear to lose my Television .... I depend on radio + T.V. for all news .... I also like an occasional play or film and some of the comics .... In fact T.V. is my night cap + takes my mind off my work before going to bed.'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 21 February 1974 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

## Chapter III

# FOLK SONG AND FANTASY; LANDSCAPE AND LEGEND

Two decades of Grace Williams's 'Welsh' works I: 1930-50

'I can give something of myself to folksong fantasias + such things ...  
because I really + truly love those traditional tunes'

(Grace Williams to Daniel Jones, 1950)





### **Folk song and Fantasy: *Hen Walia* and *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes***

Although the quotation of folk music in a composer's works is hardly dependant on their having engaged directly with traditional material in its native setting, Grace Williams, at least, experienced the singing of folk songs as a natural part of her upbringing.<sup>1</sup> As a student in Cardiff, however, in a conservative environment where '[a]ll we were given to do were Passacaglias[,] Minuets + Fugues', she would have been unable to include any such influences in her assessed work even had she possessed the inclination so to do.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, after arriving at the Royal College of Music (RCM) in 1926 to become a composition student of Ralph Vaughan Williams – the man who more than any other epitomised this practice in England – it can hardly be considered surprising that she based her first major orchestral piece on the melodies of her native Wales.<sup>3</sup> However, *Hen Walia* (1930) – dubbed *Welsh Overture* when titled in English – was mostly inspired not by any British source but by a performance of Jaromír Weinberger's *Švanda dudák* ('Schwanda the Bagpiper'), probably witnessed during Williams's travels in Europe during the summer of 1930:

Yr oeddwn wedi gweled opera Czechaid swynol, opera werin – “Schwanda” – a theimlais yr hoffwn innau ysgrifennu opera werin. Un diwrnod cefais fy hun yn hwmian yr hyn a ymddangosai i mi yn destun agoriadol da i'r *overture*; tarewais ef i lawr, ac yn fuan yr oedd y holl symudiad ar droed.<sup>4</sup>

If the intended target market for Williams's first attempt to integrate folk melodies into a work intended for the concert hall is no longer identifiable with certainty, the relatively untapped market for such works in Wales must have been a factor.<sup>5</sup> If this is true, however, it is notable that Williams's innovation can only remain so termed when considered in the light of Wales's lack of any extended tradition of writing for orchestra. One might also wonder whether a

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- 1 Responding to a question concerning her *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*, Williams noted that 'I didn't check up on any of the tunes but just wrote them down as I'd always known them'; see her letter to Enid Parry, [undated] November 1941 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).
  - 2 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). Williams's six arrangements of Welsh dance tunes probably date from her time at university either in Cardiff or London: it is possible that one of them was the winning entry in a BBC dance music competition of 1924 (see Chapter II of the present work, p. 39). There is no evidence to suggest that Williams actively sought to use folk song in anything other than straightforward arrangements until *Hen Walia* in 1930.
  - 3 Although *Hen Walia* might not have been Williams's first attempt to write for orchestra, it is the earliest surviving such score from which we can now draw any conclusions.
  - 4 'I had seen a fascinating Czech opera, a folk opera – “Schwanda” – and I felt that I would like to write a folk opera [of my own]. One day I found myself humming something that seemed to me to be a good opening subject to the overture; I jotted it down, and soon the whole movement took form.' Grace Williams, letter to the editor, *Y Cerddor*, I:20 ([published] October 1931), p. 338. It seems unlikely that any further music for the opera was ever written; indeed, this is the only known reference to it in Williams's entire correspondence.
  - 5 Whilst first performed at the National Eisteddfod at Bangor in 1931, it cannot be ascertained whether *Hen Walia* was written directly for them. Although there was little precedent for orchestral folk song fantasias in Wales, Edward German's *Welsh Rhapsody* of 1904 and Roger Quilter's *A Children's Overture* (first performed in 1919) may have provided inspiration from England.

comment in the English media relating to *Hen Walia*'s 'crudities of expression' might be a veiled criticism of the practice of simplistic quotation as much as of compositional technique.<sup>6</sup> Said crudities may, however, have been more a result of Williams's inexperienced technical palette than her choice of material, and transitions between sections are certainly rather bluntly handled.<sup>7</sup> In any case, one might expect that *Hen Walia*'s success with the Eisteddfod laity was virtually guaranteed by its somewhat populist nature, and that it might have encouraged Williams to further explore the potential of folk song as melodic inspiration.<sup>8</sup>

Williams's other works composed between 1931 and 1938, however, rather contradict this supposition: indeed, simple settings of Welsh folk songs for voice and piano and the now-lost *Variations: Breuddwyd Dafydd Rhys* represent the only quotational works of the period. Perhaps still more interesting than this unexpected absence are the changes that appear to have taken place to *Hen Walia* itself between its premiere in Bangor and broadcast, in revised form, on BBC Welsh Regional wavelength on 2 October 1936. If Williams's first references to the score's content are accurate, the original version featured three Welsh folk melodies – 'Huna Blentyn', 'Breuddwyd y Bardd' and 'Lliw Gwyn Rhosyn y Haf' – yet the surviving sources contain only 'Huna Blentyn' and a fourth, new tune, 'Synnwyr Solomon'.<sup>9</sup> Although not one of Williams's letters refers to anything more substantial than a double exercise in re-scoring (for the small Cardiff ensemble and full symphony orchestra), it is thus clear that a rather more wide-ranging overhaul must have occurred during March-April 1936.<sup>10</sup> Whether this reduction from three quotations to two constitutes a conscious decision to reduce folk song content in favour of original material is debatable but, if an accurate assessment, it could represent the start of a trend towards the dichotomy present in *Rhiannon* and occasionally thereafter.

In 1939, after experiencing the trauma of being evacuated to Lincolnshire with the Camden School for Girls, Williams spent the Christmas holidays feeling entirely dejected and

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6 Anon., 'The National Eisteddfod: The Music', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1931, p. 7.

7 Williams's achievements in *Hen Walia* and *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* are compared in pp. 72-74 below.

8 See Chapter I of the present work, pp. 8-9 for details of Williams's other works performed at Eisteddfodau during the 1930s, noting the reversal in the opinions of the non-Welsh press between folk song 'fantasy' (*Hen Walia*) and abstract work (*Suite for Orchestra*).

9 Grace Williams, letter to the editor, *Y Cerddor*, I:20 ([published] October 1931), p. 338; see also the description by a contemporary critic of 'a free setting of a few Welsh tunes' (anon., 'The National Eisteddfod: The Music', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1931, p. 7). See Appendix to the present work for full details of the surviving sources, noting that no pre-1936 material appears to survive.

10 Grace Williams, letters to Idris Lewis, 3 March ('I want to re-score ...') and 15 April 1936 ('I have now practically finished re-scoring ...') (BBC WAC, A). Williams also refers to being 'terrified' of 'the bits I experimented with'; see her letter to Mansel Thomas, [received] 23 September 1936 (BBC WAC, A).

unmotivated to compose because '[t]here just isn't any stimulus anywhere'.<sup>11</sup> After managing a mere 'half a dozen bars' of original composition, she instead 'ended up by rattling away at Welsh Nursery Rhymes' and completed the sketches of *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* 'within a few hours'.<sup>12</sup> Although the preceding decade in London might anyway have discouraged her from overtly incorporating quotations from Welsh folk music into her scores, their near-complete absence from her post-*Hen Walia* works of the 1930s arguably implies an active rejection.<sup>13</sup> In graduating from the RCM, Williams perhaps also felt that she was graduating from any creative restraints imposed by using folk song as primary thematic material. To immerse herself so totally in a style previously and comprehensively abandoned must have required a striking mental re-alignment; even a conclusion that her more 'advanced' works were never going to bring her critical acclaim or popular recognition. It is difficult to conclude other than that, in returning to themes of childhood and innocence, Williams was using folk song to unconsciously avoid a bout of depression and to express a particular lack of confidence in her ability to write original music. For all its outward *joie de vivre*, therefore, *Fantasia* was less a work born of a new urge to re-engage with Williams's national heritage than an her attempt to earn self-respect.

The swiftness of *Fantasia*'s composition and a general lack of sincerity – 'I'll have my tongue in my cheek the whole time. I've cribbed wholesale from Humperdinck, all the Slavonic composers – + even Gilbert + Sullivan, I do believe!' – are evident in Williams's treatment of the folk songs themselves.<sup>14</sup> In the decade separating *Hen Walia* from *Fantasia*, she had evidently developed a series of firm views concerning the use of folk material as a principal basis for composition:

I found I'd mixed up two tunes – had the first half of one + the second half of another – but it sounded quite nice that way + it didn't seem to matter since it was a *Fantasia* so I left it. And of course I altered the rhythm here + there (e.g.  $\frac{6}{8}$  to  $\frac{4}{4}$ ) to fit the context. I can't be a purist in such matters but just rely on my instinct. Certain methods of treating folk songs seem to me to be quite wrong + other quite right – but I can't give you reasons for my opinions.<sup>15</sup>

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11 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] January 1940 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

12 *Ibid.* The notion that *Fantasia* was written to reflect the priorities of the BBC Welsh Region is discussed in Chapter II of the present work, p. 48.

13 *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon* (1939), which incorporates both 'Cainc Dafydd Broffwyd' and 'Hen Ddarbi', is the obvious exception. No documentary evidence survives that explicitly states that the abandonment of folk song as a means of composition in the 1930s was a conscious decision.

14 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] January 1940 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

15 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] November 1941 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Nancy Werner, in her 'Twentieth Century Musical Composition in Wales and its Relationship with Traditional Welsh Music' (MA dissertation, University College, Cardiff, 1977), cites Williams's treatment of 'Ble'r Wyt Ti'n Myned' as an example of her rhythmic 'regularisation'; see p. 59. No commentator has ever noticed referred to Williams's elision of the two folk songs, but those analysing the work have disagreed both on the number and names of the melodies quoted; c.f. Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 58 and Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

These viewpoints, whilst hardly deeply controversial, seem to demonstrate an irreverence bordering on the casual, but Williams elsewhere expressed a genuine enthusiasm for Welsh folk melodies:

I can give something of myself to folksong fantasias + such things – yes I know they are derivative but they've got a splash of me in – because I really + truly love those traditional tunes.<sup>16</sup>

The clear implication from Williams's comments is that a liberal, flexible attitude towards the incorporation of folk song need not be seen as disrespectful – indeed, to impose conditions to the contrary 'would be wicked'.<sup>17</sup> Any composer's arrangement should closely reflect the character of the tune and the words associated with it rather than adopt a sanctimonious purism that inevitably restricted creative talent, whilst one tune can evoke disparate but equally legitimate responses in composers writing in different idioms. Furthermore, a successful honouring of the tune requires more than the mere competence of a workaday musician but genuine imagination and flair: qualities Williams perceived as lacking in all the arrangements by Cecil Sharp ('dull as dishwater') and 'most' of the published versions of Welsh songs.<sup>18</sup> This should not, however, be interpreted as her endorsement of all conceptually complex treatment of folk material, for she accused Benjamin Britten's interpretation of 'Llwyn Onn' ('The Ash Grove') of 'playing cat + mouse' with the tune's naturally simple beauty.<sup>19</sup>

Although neither *Hen Walia* nor *Fantasia* can be considered representative even of Williams's works of the 1930s, their obvious formal similarity can both elucidate aspects of her early technical and stylistic development and illuminate any changes in her approach to traditional Welsh music. Each comprises a number of short, contrasting sections within a single movement and brief time-frame, and firmly emphasises the centrality of the 'tune': regular phrase lengths, strongly anchored tonality and uncluttered orchestration all contributing to the dominance of melody ahead of other, arguably more sophisticated compositional devices. The origins of the melodic material and the treatment to which it is subjected, however, would seem to justify the difference between the titles of 'overture' and 'fantasia'. The revised version of

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16 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 4 February 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1413).

17 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 20 May 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Her comments on the freedom of the composer to set any melody to which they feel they can relate can be seen in the context of Williams's relationship with W.S. Gwynn Williams; see Chapter I of the present work, pp. 23-24.

18 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 8 June 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued); see also her letter to Enid Parry, [undated] February 1950 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued), where she states that the 'usual harmony-text-book accomp[animents]. of Cecil Sharp + his like kill the tunes.'

19 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] February 1950 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). By contrast, a dislike for saccharine, sentimentalist attitudes is evident in Williams's description of Rae Jenkins's arrangements as being suitable only for the 'Lyons' Corner House' school of enthusiasts; see her letter to Enid Parry, [postmark] 3 March 1951 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

*Hen Walia*, somewhat in contrast to the description of Malcolm Boyd ('a number of attractive folk tunes and folklike tunes'<sup>20</sup>), quotes only two complete folk melodies throughout: 'Huna blentyn' and 'Synnwyr Solomon' (bars 71-102; 129-156). Despite the relative sensitivity of their characterisation – soaring descants in the former and Scotch snaps and drones in the latter – their incorporation is, at first glance, distinctly unsophisticated. Each is simply re-stated in alternative instrumentation immediately after its first quotation, with 'Synnwyr Solomon' adding woodwind flourishes in slight elaboration, but to view them in such isolation would neglect Williams's efforts at preparation using her own, folk-imitative material. The first bar of the original theme between bars 59 and 70, for example, shares the same prominent movement between e'' and b'' that is found in the opening of 'Huna Blentyn'; whilst the section preceding 'Synnwyr Solomon' (bars 115-128) prepares the transition into compound time before quoting fragments of the folk melody itself. Elsewhere, however, Williams's mimicry of traditional practice is less convincing. Her melodies, whilst restricting themselves to notes of simple major/minor and even occasionally pentatonic scales, are often jagged, of wide compass and wholly instrumental in character; whilst those which are not (bars 202-209, for instance, or 227-234) are presented only briefly before being abandoned in favour of contrasting material. The two 'genuine' folk tunes, despite their integration into the passages immediately preceding and following their presentation, remain isolated within derivative music that seems to create neither effective complement nor contrast but an uneasy compromise between two musical styles.

*Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*, by contrast – which comprises little more than, 'in essence, a series of orchestrated folk songs'<sup>21</sup> – represents a wholehearted devotion to the primacy of folk melodic material that ensures it stands apart from all other of Williams's works. Although non-traditional material is inevitably present, and has clear musical direction, it is constantly subordinate to the tune it accompanies. Figure F, for example, uses a murmuring clarinet figuration to separate the component phrases of 'Si Hei Lwli 'Mabi', subsequently developing after the full statement of the melody into elaborate yet functional woodwind phrases that serve to maintain the passage's forward motion. Similarly, Werner cites the fragmentary quotation of the characteristic  motif from 'Migildi, Magildi' in the six bars before its full presentation at figure D as an example of Williams effectively anticipating the appearance of a new traditional tune.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the character of the folk tune dictates the manner of its orchestration to a

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20 *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

21 Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

22 Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

degree of subtlety rarely apparent in *Hen Walia*: note the bracing trumpet calls in 'Jim Cro' and *au talon* bowing to emphasise the playfulness of 'Migildi, Magildi'. *Fantasia*'s greatest achievement, however, in spite of its necessarily fragmented nature and thematic diversity, is that it retains a sophisticated level of cohesion that *Hen Walia* fails to approach by more confidently deploying its traditional material. In not attempting to marry Williams's own style (of *Elegy* or *Gogonedawg Arglwydd*, for example) with the music of centuries of tradition, the objective to be a light-hearted, simplistic piece of entertainment rather than a serious work of composition is more immediately apparent.<sup>23</sup> It also succeeds in more frequently managing a successful transition between formal sections, where the appearance of a new traditional melody is inevitably far less jarring than one of Williams's own devising. It may be, in fact, that her own natural gifts for melodic writing had proved to be a factor more hindering than beneficial when confronted with the the limitations of folk song-imitation.

### **In transition: *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon***

Having seemingly rejected any notion of depicting Wales in music during the early to mid-1930s, Williams was left with no option but to reverse any such neglect by the terms of her first orchestral commission from the BBC in 1939. Specifying only 'a suite on some Welsh subject', these guidelines permitted considerable scope for manoeuvrability: allowing, yet not requiring, the inclusion of traditional musical material and/or offering a free choice from the nation's historical narratives, myths, natural surroundings and contemporary culture.<sup>24</sup> Williams's initial preferred option was to attempt a combination of both in a depiction of the contemporary landscape and industrial heritage of her native county. In a set of three 'Glamorganshire Sketches – Docks, Steelworks ... and Depressed Areas', she began by using the hymn tune 'Hen Ddarbi' as a foundation upon which to base her final movement.<sup>25</sup> Soon, however, whilst pleased with the progress being made, she felt that her music no longer adequately reflected its subject matter and instead focussed upon an opening section of 'background music' for Shakespeare's portrayal of Owain Glyndŵr in his *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*.<sup>26</sup>

23 Whether concert programmers or media commentators have themselves always clarified this distinction is somewhat debatable, however; see, for example, Chapter II of the present work, p. 55, footnote 88.

24 J.G. Roberts, letter to Grace Williams, 2 January 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

25 This quote and all other following information concerning Williams's plans before turning to the Mabinigion are found in her letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 17 March 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1386). The exact location of the said docks can be presumed to be Barry (Williams's childhood home) and the steelworks are conclusively identified as those of Port Talbot (see *ibid.*), but the geographical origin of 'depressed areas' is less apparent. Williams never related how she came across this hymn tune or why she selected it for use in such a context, whilst neither 'Hen Ddarbi' nor any of the well known folk songs from which it may have derived are particularly associated with Glamorgan.

26 Williams would later realise this aim at considerable length in her *Symphonic Impressions*, whose first movement ('Glendower the Warrior') is based on the same starting point in the drama, beginning 'At my

Upon finding that she was unable to extend her musical ideas sufficiently, Williams subsequently abandoned this as well and turned to the Mabinogion for inspiration, finally selecting the story of Rhiannon, Pwyll, Gwawl, Pryderi and Teyrn.<sup>27</sup>

Key to understanding Williams's attitude towards composing to a 'theme' is the recognition that, despite having twice changed her mind about the depiction being attempted, she discarded none of the music she had already composed and chose instead to incorporate it into the final concept. The 'Depressed Areas' music founded on 'Hen Ddarbi' became the basis for 'The Penance'; whilst that originally inspired by Owain Glyndŵr was transferred to the conflict between Pwyll and Gwawl.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore impossible to interpret *Rhiannon* as wholly inspired by the literature and narrative implied by its title, and very much simpler to accuse Williams's post-broadcast description of the work ('just a straightforward bit of programme music') of being somewhat misleading.<sup>29</sup> In truth, however, the martial character and unrelenting nature of its first movement ('Allegro molto') at least seems no less appropriate for the battle for Rhiannon's hand in marriage than a portrayal of Glyndŵr, warrior lord of historical Wales.<sup>30</sup> Less obvious is any immediate connection between Glamorgan's 'depressed areas', the penance of an exiled queen, and the quotation of 'Hen Ddarbi' in either; unless one interprets the deconstruction into its component phrases as a direct portrayal of Rhiannon's successive implorations to passers-by. Only the second and fourth movements – 'The Nuptial Feast' and 'The Return of Pryderi', each composed after the finalising of the subject matter – possess the variety of characterisation necessary to drive forward the linear nature of story-telling. Both clearly delineate between the 'sub-events' that take place within the paragraph of the narrative: tellingly, only these passages are based upon literary quotes of more than one sentence.<sup>31</sup>

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nativity | The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes [...].

27 It appears that Williams used Charlotte Guest's 1848 translation of the Mabinogion legends rather than the original Welsh, and certainly used this adaptation for the synopsis of the Rhiannon story that she subsequently produced for the BBC; see her letter to Idris Lewis, 14 February 1939 (BBC WAC, B). Williams later described her finding of a suitable topic as a 'great relief'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 17 March 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1386).

28 The incredibly short timeframe during which *Rhiannon* was completed could have required such an 'efficient' working method: she accepted the commission on 3 January 1939 and had completed the sketches by 22 January; see her letters to J.G. Roberts and Idris Lewis respectively (BBC WAC, B). No draft material for 'Glamorganshire Sketches' or the early portrayal of Glyndŵr survives.

29 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] October 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

30 The first movement is based upon a single line of the legend, which in Guest's translation reads: 'And thereupon Pwyll's household came down upon the palace and seized all the host that had come with Gwawl, and cast them into prison.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 14 February 1939 (BBC WAC, B).

31 The second movement depicts the quote 'And they went to the tables and sat down. And they ate and feasted, and spent the night in mirth', with the point at which the feast begins marked by an upsurge in tempo and regularisation of the  $\frac{4}{4}$  beat. Narrative development is even more apparent in the fourth movement, where the approach of Pryderi and Teyrn towards the palace, their meeting with Rhiannon, the ensuing discourse in the royal court and Teyrn's departure for his homeland are all discernible.



The lack of correlation between the third and fourth movements of *Rhiannon* – those based on traditional material – and the first and second leads to the presumption that Williams had already concluded that a portrayal of Wales need not resort to folk song in order to be 'genuine'. Indeed, it is tempting to speculate that the subsequent withdrawal of the two movements based upon folk song demonstrates a renewed disillusionment with its use as a means of self-expression.<sup>32</sup> Shortly after the premiere of the revised version of the score in 1943, she was already expressing doubts about the content of both movements:

I don't like the music of [the last] movement any more – the tune at the beginning is a Welsh tune ... + one tires of it easily. The slow mvt. tune is also a traditional tune; + somehow this doesn't have anything like the appeal which it had for me when I wrote the movement.<sup>33</sup>

Although repeated ribbing about the resemblance of 'Cainc Dafydd Broffwyd' – an ever-present motto in the fourth movement – to one of the principal themes of Sibelius's Symphony No. 2 cannot have helped Williams's fragile confidence, it seems more likely that she had concluded that folk song quotation overly restricted her creativity.<sup>34</sup> Despite the appearance of *Fantasia* in 1940 and her very occasional use of traditional melody in later works (including the Violin Concerto, see below), *Rhiannon* thus marks something of a watershed in Williams's career. Her refusal to cling to folk material but desire to continue to explore themes related to Wales, however, is evident throughout the scores of the next thirty-five years.

### **Landscape and Legend: *Symphonic Impressions and Sea Sketches***

Having abandoned the one undeniably Welsh aspect of *Rhiannon*'s musical content, Williams continued to expand upon the themes of Wales's landscape and history already touched upon in her initial sketches for the BBC commission. Early in 1942, she exhumed the idea of depicting Owain Glyndŵr but, having already used her previous musical ideas in her portrayal of Pwyll vs Gwawl, was forced to devise wholly new material.<sup>35</sup> A certain level of technical and

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32 It is impossible to precisely date the withdrawal of the latter two movements: the first two were played alone at both the Colwyn Bay Eisteddfod in 1947 and at a concert organised by the Cardiff Cymmrodorion Society in 1949, but the others may well only have officially left Williams's canon in 1950 ('I have now scrapped [them]'); see her letter to Enid Parry, 3 April 1950 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

33 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 7 June 1943 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The revised score was premiered by the BBC Northern Orchestra under Mansel Thomas; the BBC Welsh Orchestra having been disbanded during wartime.

34 Clarence Raybould had already observed that 'there was rather a lot of Sibelius in it', whilst the orchestral players in the first performances of both the original and revised versions teased her about the supposed 'cribbing'; see Grace Williams, letters to Enid Parry, [undated] October 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued) and Elizabeth Maconchy, 7 June 1943 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

35 The first known mention of this revised idea occurs in Williams's letter to Enid Parry, 27 February 1942 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued), but Williams's use of the present tense ('I am writing ...') implies that work had already begun.

conceptual advancement would also have been necessary for, in 1939, Williams had rejected the topic's suitability because she 'felt I couldn't spin it out for 20 mins.'<sup>36</sup> Within three years, she would be sufficiently optimistic about its potential to note that the title 'may turn into something else – perhaps a symphony – before I've finished it.'<sup>37</sup> After only a few months of having embarked on the project, however, the centrality of Glyndŵr was already in doubt; Williams wondering whether it was 'too far-fetched' and again considering abandoning the idea.<sup>38</sup> Having decided upon its necessity, she was beset by other problems: having seemingly exhausted the characteristics of Shakespeare's role (warrior, dreamer and magician), she adapted her plans to include a symphonic epilogue, ostensibly to depict the somehow distinct traits of the historical figure.<sup>39</sup> With this uncertainty again becoming apparent, therefore, questions inevitably arise concerning the validity of the connection between Williams's music and its supposed inspiration.

Much as in *Rhiannon*, the quotes used as inspiration for the first three movements – whilst considerably more developed and evocative in Shakespeare's prose than that of Charlotte Guest – served to supply Williams with imagery rather than a narrative development upon which to build horizontal movement. Being portrayals of character traits rather than snippets of storyline, however, the rather more impressionistic nature of each movement seems more conceptually appropriate. Whereas, in *Rhiannon*, the subject of the evocation is scarcely abundantly clear, the same could not be said at least of the central two movements of *Symphonic Impressions*, which ably catch the contrasting atmospheres of the dream-world and wizardry. By making the link between music and narrative more vague, Williams was arguably more successful in creating her desired portrayals. Conversely, the fourth movement might be considered to require greater programmatic association than Williams's own 'a retrospective impression of Owain Glyndwr [*sic.*], great figure of Welsh history': the processions and pageantry are obviously representative of the medieval lord's campaigns, the sections of repose rather less so.<sup>40</sup>

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36 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 17 March 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1386).

37 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 27 February 1942 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

38 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] March 1943 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Maconchy's response may have been an attempt at diplomatic reassurance, but seems to have been sufficient to sway her friend: 'I certainly think you ought to call it a Symphony ... [but] keep the Owen Glendower name & the suggestions it affords, which I like very much.'; see her letter to Grace Williams, 2 June 1943 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

39 A detailed account of the evolution of *Symphonic Impressions* is included in the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007), pp. 4-18. In the present work, the spelling 'Glyndŵr' is preferred to Shakespeare's 'Glendower' throughout.

40 Grace Williams, explanatory introduction to score of *Symphonic Impressions*, 1943 (NLW, Grace Williams

The first movement – the only one to which Williams attached any specific connection with events in Glyndŵr's life as opposed to his supposed personal qualities – is formally the weakest of the four. To some extent, this is surely a result of her shifting uncertainly between the two distinct musical ideas:

[T]his movement shaped itself, somehow: one thing grew from another + yet somehow it fulfilled what I wanted – i.e. a first section of fire + brimstone + pageantry – then a middle section ... of remoteness + reflection, + then a short recapitulation snatching at the feeling of the opening, but never bursting forth on it + gradually giving out; rather like old Owen [*sic.*] himself, in fact.<sup>41</sup>

Its perfunctory ending, whilst perhaps fitting for a musical portrayal of the historical figure, wholly disrupts the impression of Glyndŵr the warrior that Williams had previously created on a smaller scale in her sketches for *Rhiannon*. Any disparity between text and score is also evident in the second section of the movement's overall binary structure, where the complete relaxation of tension is not pre-empted by the literary quotation.<sup>42</sup> The principal theme of this passage – presented first in the trumpet at bar 156 – does, however, display Williams's gift for memorable melodic writing, her debt to folk song as inspiration for it and, therefore, a clear line of descent from the quotational techniques of *Rhiannon*. The fifteen bars of the theme's duration are folk-like in their melodic simplicity, limited vocal-esque compass of a minor ninth, and gentle 'lombard' figures that inflect both rhythm and harmony. Williams's failure to develop this theme beyond its repetition (in bars 170-184 and 186-199, the second time with subtle variation) is perhaps indicative of her lack of confidence at this stage in her career when incorporating such material into her less obviously derivative style of writing.

The second major work of the 1940s to address a Welsh subject matter has since proved far more enduring than *Symphonic Impressions*: a fact probably only partially to do with its publication and wide distribution by Oxford University Press.<sup>43</sup> Being a depiction of landscape rather than personality or historical narrative, *Sea Sketches* afforded Williams considerable flexibility in her methods of portrayal and the requirement only to sustain characterisation in a vague, impressionistic sense. Though therefore a direct successor only to *The Silent Pool*,<sup>44</sup> a

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Music Manuscripts, A7/1).

41 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 7 June 1943 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued); see also the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed', *op. cit.*, pp. 21-24.

42 The movement as a whole can be analysed as a simple AB-coda construction, with Boyd's hope that A and B may represent the first and second subjects of 'some vast Mahlerian sonata structure' going unrealised (*op. cit.*, p. 24).

43 *Symphonic Impressions* was performed in its entirety only three times during Williams's lifetime (the Scherzo was also performed alone), all between 1950 and 1952. *Sea Sketches* probably ranks second only to *Fantasia* in a list of her compositions ordered by frequency of performance.

44 There is no evidence to connect the *The Silent Pool*, a brief, early work for piano solo, with any specific location in Welsh mythology. The addition of 'Y Llyn Mud' as an alternative title for the work appears to be

far stronger connection is apparent with *Rhiannon*, for Williams's first conceptual ideas – 'a short suite of pieces connected with Barry ... seascapes perhaps' – all but directly re-visit the subject matter of 'Glamorganshire Sketches'.<sup>45</sup> Even the title, with its overtones of techniques more familiar in visual art, is clearly based upon the once-abandoned work. Williams's repeated willingness to re-embrace earlier concepts (c.f. also *Symphonic Impressions*) also seems to demonstrate a conscious decision to incorporate Welsh themes during the years of the Second World War.<sup>46</sup> Whether this ideal was reflected in the resultant music, however, is a somewhat complex issue. Aside from the movement title 'Channel Sirens' and Williams's published dedication to 'my parents who had the good sense to set up home on the coast of Glamorgan', *Sea Sketches* relates no more concretely to the Barry coastline than does *La mer* to the English Channel. Boyd concludes that 'there is little in the music to suggest that the seascapes are specifically Welsh', likening much of the music instead to the Viennese, late Romantic flourishing of Richard Strauss.<sup>47</sup>

Although there are no passages of folk song imitation, aspects of *Sea Sketches*'s musical style do audibly develop models explored in earlier works. (One can compare, for example, the parallel triadic movement and fragmented, chromatically descending melodies of 'Breakers' and 'Glendower the Warrior'; and oscillating quavers and triplets in 'Calm Sea at Summer', 'Glendower the Dreamer' and the second subject of *Sinfonia Concertante*'s opening movement.) Given this, if Boyd's assertion is correct, it follows that, when not utilising the resources of folk song and hymnody, Williams's supposedly Welsh-themed works of the early 1940s were so on the surface only. Simply put, once work and movement titles are dispensed with, these compositions are identifiable solely with their composer rather than their national origin.<sup>48</sup> Although Boyd's comment – 'as far as the character of the music is concerned it might have been composed anywhere between Glasgow and Gorlovka' – refers specifically to *Sinfonia Concertante*, there is little in stylistic terms to separate this work from *Sea Sketches* and *Symphonic Impressions*.<sup>49</sup> This entirely abstract score shares many of the latter's motivic

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posthumous and created solely for its modern recording; see Appendix to the present work for details.

45 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 2 November 1943 (BBC WAC, C). Lewis had originally suggested that Williams write an abstract piano trio for a concert in aid of the Barry music club; see his letter to Grace Williams, 27 October 1943 (BBC WAC, C).

46 Soon after completing *Sea Sketches*, Williams would also acknowledge a growing homesickness in asserting 'I don't want to stay in London – I just long to get home and live in comfort by the sea'; see her letter to Gerald Cockshott, [postmark] 19 October 1945 (quoted in Boyd, *op. cit.* p. 28; the original Williams-Cockshott correspondence has seemingly been lost). She eventually returned to Barry in 1947.

47 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

48 The one particular stylistic trait that should probably be considered contrary to this statement – the use of the stressed appoggiatura – is discussed in Chapter IV of the present work.

49 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

fingerprints and scoring traits, with short woodwind interpolations, aggressive unison string writing and trumpet solos all prominent and extended melodies used infrequently. Indeed, there are hints of the lombard rhythms of 'Glendower the Warrior' in the accented dissonances of the first movement, and notable hemiolas – 'lombard harmonies', to some extent – in the second. If scientific control were needed to question whether Williams's two best known Welsh landscape- and legend-inspired works in any way represent something intimately nationally-inflected, *Sinfonia Concertante* could ably demonstrate that they do not.

### **Interlude: Grace Williams and opera pre-*The Parlour***

Aside from quotational techniques and the setting of text, the only indisputable method for a composer to display their nationality in their work is to add to it non-musical elements concerning whose interpretation there can be no debate, perhaps most obviously fulfilled in the writing of an opera. This interpolation briefly recounts Williams's three other ultimately unrealised attempts (i.e. beyond that with which *Hen Walia* is associated; see above) to do so prior to the commissioning of *The Parlour* in 1959: efforts that on each occasion focussed on Wales as setting and subject matter.<sup>50</sup>

Williams's most significant early ideas concerning her potential as a composer of opera arose soon after her emergence from her self-imposed exile from composition (after *Rhiannon*, 1939) and during the period when the lure of Wales as a source of inspiration was at its strongest.<sup>51</sup> Having only briefly considered an operatic project before, she was spurred on by some rather double-edged critical comments that suggested she had untapped potential:

[*Rhiannon*] illustrated ... how the absence of a national opera can frustrate the natural talents of composers. This work was not really symphonic at all; it was stage music in the concert room – and this was particularly true of the second movement ... which would have made a splendid accompaniment to pageantry. In the concert room music of this kind is dependent on its own resources; and the resources have to be much more sinewy and self-sufficient than anything that will pass muster or even create a good effect in the theatre.<sup>52</sup>

Williams's response to these remarks was unsurprisingly enthusiastic ('I wish to goodness I

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50 Williams seems to have scarcely considered a Welsh theme for *The Parlour* but sought a tale with 'a touch of hiraeth' for the television opera commission that followed. Having 'read several Welsh short stories', however, she found that 'nothing was up my street', whilst thoughts of dramatising a 'very harrowing' murder case from West Wales (that allegedly had overtones of *Carmen* and *Wozzeck*) also came to naught; see her letters to Enid Parry, 6 October 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued) and Elizabeth Maconchy, 4 December 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

51 Between January 1939 and January 1940, Williams wrote *Rhiannon*, *Gogonedawg Arglywdd* and *Fantasia*: only the brief *The Song of Mary* and *Rhapsody* (for two clarinets) were exempt from Welsh inflection.

52 J.A. Westrup, 'Broadcast Music: Categories and Individulality', *The Listener*, XXII:564 (2 November 1939), p. 884.

could get to work on an opera – preferably a one-act opera to begin with') and she immediately latched onto the potential of a Welsh subject matter.<sup>53</sup> Initially considering Twm o'r Nant as a possible subject solely because of his characterful name, and without knowing anything of his biography, she proceeded no further than requesting further information from Enid Parry.<sup>54</sup> Though the reasons for this swift abandonment are unspecified, they no doubt relate to the need to translate any relevant material and the time pressures of her teaching position at the Camden School for Girls, and there is no evidence that she began sketches either for a libretto or score.<sup>55</sup> Williams returned to thoughts of writing of an opera in 1949, when she collaborated with poet, dramatist and historical novelist Henry Treece to prepare a libretto based on the unjust conviction and sentence of Richard Lewis, better known as Dic Penderyn.<sup>56</sup> Without Arts Council or BBC support, however, Williams again had little prospect of financing its completion. Similar concerns undoubtedly influenced her inability to proceed beyond the very earliest stages of the compositional process in 1954, when a BBC Wales recording of Saunders Lewis's *Blodeuwedd* in English translation had Williams 'composing music for it (in my head) as I listened'.<sup>57</sup> A year later, only Arwel Hughes's choice to adapt the same text (based on a folk tale from the Mabinogion) for the operatic stage before she herself could do so prevented Williams embarking on the project upon being given the opportunity by the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain (WC/ACGB).<sup>58</sup>

Given that only one of Williams's four operatic outlines – *Dic Penderyn* – proceeded even to a musical sketch of a dramatic scene, their contribution to our understanding of her life and music remains inherently speculative.<sup>59</sup> Interesting, however, is the common ground shared by all

53 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 30 November 1939 (BBC WAC, B). Lewis's delayed response was positive but measured, and without the firm commitment to a performance that would perhaps have prompted actual composition; see his letter to Grace Williams, 8 February 1940 (BBC WAC, B).

54 Williams seems to have made this request twice, first in 1940 and again five years later: perhaps only receiving the necessary details on the second occasion; see her letters to Enid Parry, 21 March 1940 and [received] 22 February 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

55 The last known reference to the subject in Williams's correspondence reads: 'Something keeps telling me that if I studied [Twm o'r Nant] – + translated + re-arranged I might make shall we say a one-act opera libretto – The miser-young wife theme is very reminiscent of Don Pasquale, I think.'; see her letter to Enid Parry, [received] 22 February 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

56 This collaboration immediately followed Williams and Treece's joint submission of *Rataplan* for the 1949 Italia Prize competition. The sole source of concrete information concerning *Dic Penderyn* is Williams's letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

57 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 23 April 1954 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

58 Williams only chose to write her Symphony No. 2 after being unable to find an alternative plot; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 18 September 1955 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1430). When Hughes subsequently selected *Serch yw'r Doctor* instead, she considered using an extract from *Blodeuwedd* for 'just one aria (or lyric) with oboe or cor angl[ais]. accomp[animent] only (or maybe harp as well[!])'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 15 February 1957 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

59 Although *Hen Walia* might be considered to be rather more significant than the *Dic Penderyn* sketch, it provides no insight whatsoever into the evolution of the drama that might have followed it (unlike even the

three proto-works in the common nationality of their central characters and setting. From this fact alone can be drawn the supposition that an interest in Wales and the Welsh was, at the time, a greater priority than the artistic, political or moral statements that opera can convey.<sup>60</sup> However, in her references to the only work to be meaningfully committed to paper there are echoes of her previous difficulties in attempting to fuse traditional and original music when musically depicting Wales:

I still feel that it's a fine opera story – though now I doubt whether it's right for my music .... [T]he first act might find me writing in my folk-song fantasia style + my two distinct styles (... the other the me that's a bit different) might crop up in the same work + that would be confusing.<sup>61</sup>

It might be considered that this stylistic decision – perhaps also applicable to her other plot outlines – contributed every bit as much as the WC/ACGB's refusal to commission the opera to Williams proceeding no further than sketching a single scene in vocal score.<sup>62</sup>

### **Betwixt and between: Stylistic divergence and the Violin Concerto**

By the end of the 1940s, Williams found herself torn between her natural desire to creatively express herself and the equally powerful need to be able to support herself financially. The years 1945-49, for example, saw the completion of five of her most significant works for radio and countless folk song arrangements for the BBC Welsh Region but scarcely any examples of less lucrative, original material for the concert hall.<sup>63</sup> Although *The Merry Minstrel* (1949) represents something of a hybrid between the two, its lightweight and childlike nature perhaps render it analogous to the position of *Fantasia* within Williams's output of the turn of the previous decade: a withdrawal to simplicity and conservatism in the face of challenges elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> This enforced return to work as an arranger was a source of considerable frustration not merely because it left her insufficient time for original composition but because both the quantity and quality of the scores produced had the potential to impact upon her reputation as a composer.<sup>65</sup> The higher the profile of the concert in which one of her

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wholly unrealised ideas for *Twm o'r Nant* and *Blodeuwedd*).

60 The working class, left-wing, industrial nature of Dic Penderyn would, however, certainly have appealed to Williams, who had once considered herself 'almost a communist'; see her letter to Lorraine Davies, [undated] 1953 (BBC WAC, D).

61 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

62 *Ibid.* All that now remains is a synopsis of the proposed plot together with fragments of the libretto that indicate that the whole work, had it been completed, would have stretched to three acts (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, J2/1).

63 Of the five works for radio, three (*Hannibal*, *Aucassin and Nicolette* and *The End of a World*) do not survive. Alongside *The End of a World*, Williams collaborated with Henry Treece on *The Dark Island* and *Rataplan*.

64 *Flight* and *Fairground*, both composed in the months after the completion of *The Merry Minstrel*, may represent a short burst of self-expression on an affordable scale.

65 For details of the BBC Welsh Region's role in propagating the popular impression (at least in Williams's

arrangements was performed, the more she felt that it brought a gradual re-alignment of public and critical opinion concerning stylistic limitation. A recital given by Peter Pears – one of the most famous names ever associated with her music – of her settings of 'Sweet Primroses', 'The Lass of Swansea Town' and 'Fair Lisa' ('Lisa Lân'), for example, elicited the following account:

I did some traditional Welsh ballads [*sic.*] arrangements (Fl[ute] – Ob[oe]. [and] Str[ing]. 4tet) for Peter Pears' recital in London last week + the last one was encored! – so now he's doing two of them in Music in Miniature in Christmas Week. Sometimes I could tear to tatters this folk song mesh I've got entangled in. I do long to do other things – but just can't afford to: except for a month or so each year. If I go hungry I get very ill.<sup>66</sup>

If Williams found the upscaling of the likely audience for Pears's recital unpalatable, she would have been only too aware of the potential popularity of *Blue Scar*, the 1948 feature film for which she had written the score.<sup>67</sup> For the film itself she had little but praise ('very realistic + authentic ... [with] none of the slop + emotionalism which so many Welsh radio writers ... cash in on') but she worried both that it was 'too realistic for music'<sup>68</sup> and that she 'felt sort of tainted ... selling myself for a bit of extra cash'.<sup>69</sup> The score for *Blue Scar* is littered with folk song quotations presented in varying degrees of transformation, with particular prominence granted to 'Mae Nghariad i'n Fenws', 'Y Gwŷdd', 'Sosban Fach' and – notably – 'Hen Ddarbi' once again.<sup>70</sup> Although the choice of individual melodies appears to have been Williams's own, it is not clear whether the focus on folk song was the decision of the film company or its composer: Williams's references to writing 'drivel' and continued emphasis on having accepted the job purely for its financial benefits may, however, be telling.<sup>71</sup> The one extract from the score that Williams unreservedly considered 'decent' – the 'Mountain Love Scene', featuring thematic allusions to 'Y Gwŷdd' and later performed independently as *Mountain Sequence* – was apparently 'the one bit of the film people weren't impressed by'.<sup>72</sup>

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perception) that she was a composer only of *Fantasia* and, earlier, *Hen Walia*, see Chapter II of the present work.

66 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 18 November 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1417). Peter Pears's concert with members of the London Harpsichord Ensemble was given at The Friends House, London on 14 November 1950.

67 In providing the music for *Blue Scar*, Williams became the first British woman to score a full-length feature; see anon., 'First Woman to Compose Feature Score', *The Cinema Studio* (supplement to *The Cinema*), 1:17 (July 1948), p. 5 and Jan Swynnoe, *The best years of British film music, 1935-1958* (New York: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 110-118.

68 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 11 December 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

69 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] October 1948 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1400).

70 Swynnoe, *op. cit.*, discusses these motifs in detail. Williams's determination that folk songs should be treated with care is clear in her refusal to incorporate 'Lisa Lân' because she 'couldn't make it sound contemporary or South Welsh'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 11 December 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

71 Grace Williams, letters to Daniel Jones, [undated] October 1948 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1400) and Enid Parry, 11 December 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

72 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 11 December 1948 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). The use of



*Blue Scar* and *Dic Penderyn* were perhaps the final catalysts for Williams's conclusion that the twin styles in which she had been writing (that which concentrated on innovative folk song arrangement and that which clearly sought to avoid it) were almost wholly incompatible.<sup>73</sup> By 1950, she had come to believe that the majority of Welsh composers were 'schizophrenic'; forced to eke out a living by accepting mundane musical jobs whilst longing for a release of unhindered composition.<sup>74</sup> Further comments reveal, however, that she did not consider arrangements themselves to be unworthwhile or wholly unrepresentative: 'I felt that what I wrote [i.e. commissioned arrangements] was live music because it happens that part of me does quite naturally belong to the plebs.'<sup>75</sup> It is clear, therefore, that Williams was frustrated with the composer's lot in life rather than the material with which he/she worked. Although all but avoiding folk song as a means of composition after *Rhiannon* and *Fantasia*, she never made any attempt to decry those of her colleagues who still found it integral to their style. Indeed, she reserved severe criticism not for the tunes or the works they inspired but the concert and broadcast programmers who continually preferred conservatism to innovation: a restriction she believed to have been imposed as early as the 1930s and hardly lifted prior to her death.<sup>76</sup>

The attempts at stylistic divergence that Williams had been making during the 1940s climaxed in the only one of her major abstract scores to incorporate the direct quotation of folk song: the Violin Concerto, completed in February 1950 and her first wholly abstract work since *Sinfonia Concertante*. Its relevance to the present discussion, however, can be found in its second movement (Andante sostenuto), whose use of 'Hen Ddarbi' is sufficiently subtle to almost warrant the use of the term 'subversive'.<sup>77</sup> This impression is hardly dispelled by Williams's own insistence that, if listeners failed to note its insertion, 'I wasn't going to tell them', whilst

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transformed motifs of 'Y Gwŷdd' in *Mountain Sequence* (bars 29-32, for example, with the rising and falling first three notes of the minor scale being reiterated elsewhere) can in many ways be seen as a precursor to similar techniques used in the Violin Concerto (after 'Hen Ddarbi'; see below).

73 See Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued); quoted on p. 82 above.

74 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 4 February 1950 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1413). It is evident from this letter that Jones was extremely reluctant to reduce himself to small commissions, feeling that they inhibited his self-expression in other works.

75 *Ibid.* Williams's contrasted herself with Jones as follows: 'You and I are different. I am not naturally a revolutionary. I think perhaps you are. I think the real you will emerge only in your "ivory-tower" works. When you write conventional stuff I don't feel there's any personal stamp on it. It may be very competent + pleasant on the ear, but it's derivative + won't cut any ice in the long run'. (*Ibid.*)

76 Consider, for example, her chastisement of BBC Radio 3 for having 'missed yet another opportunity of doing Castell Caernarfon ... which is exactly the same length as *Fantasia*' (they had broadcast the latter work); see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 14 March 1973 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

77 Having previously used the same melody in sections of *Rhiannon* and *Blue Scar* that were both subsequently withdrawn (in the latter case by the film's producers), Williams observed: 'Queer how I clung to that tune .... Third time lucky!'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 3 April 1950 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

Enid Parry seems to have been the only one of her correspondents to notice the quotation.<sup>78</sup> The tune's application is limited to variations upon its first phrase –



– a motif that initially appears blatant in presentation but whose features become so all-pervading during the course of the movement that its original form and association with an extended folk melody are all but forgotten.<sup>79</sup> During the movement's six- to seven-minute duration, the two pairs of falling thirds and the following rising second are treated almost obsessively by orchestral soloists but with endless variations in rhythm and slight inflections of pitch.<sup>80</sup> The fifth and sixth pitches of the seven-note phrase flit between accidentals at will, for example, whilst versions of the stress pattern and lombard rhythm ♪♪ (derived from the second and third bars of the melody) are characteristic of the chordal accompaniment throughout.<sup>81</sup>

Whilst the incorporation of 'Hen Ddarbi' was hardly a departure from Williams's previous works, her approach to its use as thematic material represented a rather radical new development. The Violin Concerto might be considered her absorption, rather than mimicry, of a folk tradition that had once been as much a source of frustration as inspiration. Within it, the traditional melody became the means of self-expression rather than its end result: a complete contrast to the same tune's presentation as the sole and central focus of *Rhiannon*'s 'The Penance'. Boyd contends that '[t]he Violin Concerto is no masterpiece', citing in particular the unusual movement structure that essentially reads slow-slow-fast, but fails to note its significance as an advancement in Williams's understanding of how Welsh cultural heritage might relate to and influence a contemporary musical language.<sup>82</sup> If *Penillion* (1955) is identified as the first work of Williams's maturity, the Violin Concerto was surely the 'tipping point' that enabled such inspiration to flourish after a period of some twenty years of conceptual and technical exploration.<sup>83</sup>

78 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 3 April 1950 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

79 Extract shown as first heard in the second movement of the Violin Concerto. In the original hymn tune, the leading note is flattened.

80 The phrase is also often quoted without its initial rising perfect fourth.

81 In 'The Penance' from *Rhiannon*, these rhythmic patterns clearly inflect non-quotational melodic lines, but any impact upon accompanying figures is extremely limited.

82 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

83 If Boyd's chapter titles ('Years of Maturity: 1955-1971', for example) are a case in point, consider also his description for *Grove* that '*Penillion* ... inaugurated a period of greater maturity' (XXVII, p. 407) and Arnold Whittall's reference to 1955-61 as Williams's 'richest creative period'; see 'Grace Williams, 1906-1977', *Soundings*, VII (June 1978), pp. 19-25.



## Chapter IV

# LINGUISTIC IMPOSITION AND INSPIRATION

Two decades of Grace Williams's 'Welsh' works II: 1951-71

'Whether it is the fault of English people or not for not knowing that there are masterpieces of Welsh literature is beside the point .... the mountain ought to go to Mohamet'

(Grace Williams to Enid Parry, 1945)



Much like the incorporation of folk song, the setting of a nation's language in a composer's works ensures that their musical connection with said nation is all but undeniable, for the competent setter of Welsh has little choice but to respond to its natural rhythms and cadences. This chapter, therefore, begins with an account of Grace Williams's relationship with Welsh texts; the setting of which alone would demonstrate little beyond competence and a level of affinity. It proceeds to analyse Williams's extrapolation of a further text-based and uniquely Welsh art form – *penillion* singing<sup>1</sup> – onto her own instrumental works and questions whether this, too, represents an attempt to differentiate between her openly Welsh-themed works and any more abstract style of composition. Finally, Williams's last two major works to present themselves as relating specifically to Wales are examined for any significant differences between their musical content and that of their near contemporaries. Much as in the previous chapter, no factor so identified can be considered inherently Welsh, but any such presence would still contribute to modern understanding of Williams's own perception of her compositional voice and its inspiration.

### **Chapter and verse: Grace Williams and the language of heaven**

Despite having two Welsh-speaking parents and receiving her very earliest upbringing in a semi-bilingual environment, there can be no doubt that Williams's natural language of expression was English throughout her life.<sup>2</sup> This situation presented significant practical barriers to her establishing a full-time career as a musician in Wales: it virtually barred her, for example, from delivering adjudications at the National Eisteddfod or from making a major contribution to Welsh-language broadcasting.<sup>3</sup> She did, however, possess a considerable level of understanding but preferred to keep to her abilities to herself, perhaps for fear either of being judged inadequate or becoming too closely associated with any Welsh-speaking (and sometimes

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1 Throughout this chapter, references to *penillion* refer to the art of singing verses to harp accompaniment (rather than the simple translation of the English words 'verses' or 'stanzas'), also described interchangeably as *canu penillion*, *cerdd dant* and *canu gyda'r tannau*. Williams's own orchestral work of the same name is distinguishable by its always beginning with the necessary capital letter. For an English-language summary of the practices of *penillion* and the unique technical vocabulary associated with it (*cainc* and *datgeiniad*, for instance), see Aled Lloyd Davies, 'An Introduction to Penillion Singing', *Welsh Music*, IX:9 (Summer 1997), pp. 20-36.

2 Williams recalled that, although her parents 'did their best' during her first two years of life, Welsh was scarcely spoken at home; see Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). Marian Glyn Evans (Williams's sister), in an interview with the present writer, 2 January 2009, attributed this situation to the difference between the native dialects of her parents, who came from Caernarfon and Llanelli and consequently found mutual communication difficult.

3 Reacting to Enid Parry's suggestion that she consider giving a radio talk in Welsh, Williams wrote: 'I'd never have the courage + it would give listeners the impression (if I rehearsed my bit well + read it) that I was able to speak Welsh quite naturally – which isn't true'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 15 December 1957 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

inward-looking) cliques within artistic circles.<sup>4</sup> Instead, she used them rather covertly; noting, for example, that 'I understand Welsh pretty well – far more than they [Roy Bohana and, probably, other senior figures] realise'.<sup>5</sup> In either case, this reluctance to engage directly with Welsh partially explains her initial unwillingness to set Welsh-language texts (folk songs apart) for public performance: the very brief *Gogonedawg Arglwydd* (1939), *Carol Nadolig* (1955) and *Yr Eos* (1958) comprise her entire such output until the early 1960s. Importantly, however, she felt no such constraints when it came to a private fascination with the written word that, in later life, would inspire some of her most significant scores.

Although each of the aforementioned choral works represents an effective demonstration of Williams's compositional style at the time of its completion, the presence from the outset in each of an alternative English text (no doubt to encourage performances) would render their assessment in the present context of limited relevance. The same cannot be said, however, of a series of works written between 1962 and 1964 that comprise Williams's only Welsh songs and, in *Benedicite*, her most extended use of the language in any of her works (despite its first being set in English; see below).<sup>6</sup> Though not the first occasion for which she had considered setting Welsh poetry for solo voice, the terms of the BBC commission for its 1962-63 Festival of Welsh Music of a 'setting of Welsh words in penillion form for voice and harp' presented her with an ideal opportunity to embrace this rich vein of cultural heritage.<sup>7</sup> It also coincided with the publication of Thomas Parry's *The Oxford Book of Welsh Verse*; a comprehensive and scholarly yet approachable introduction to a millennium of Welsh poetry to which Williams would return on several occasions.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the printing of this particular collection of poems perhaps re-awoke in her a previously expressed belief that Wales had failed to

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4 Williams had little time for those whose purported enthusiasm for Welsh she perceived as merely being a means of seeking so-called respectability; see, for example, her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 6 February 1956 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued), in which she claims that Ian Parrott 'immediately set out to win Welsh favour by learning Welsh; + gradually we realised he was the most brazen opportunist we'd ever come across.'

5 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] December 1972 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1507).

6 *Stand forth, Seithenin!* (1935, for baritone and orchestra) used Charlotte Guest's English translation of the Welsh text 'Seithenin, saf di allan' from the Mabinogion; Williams also set text by Saunders Lewis as a song within her incidental music to the BBC adaptation of his play, *Esther*, but it has never been arranged as an independent composition.

7 Dorothy Ross, letter to Grace Williams, 21 June 1962 (BBC WAC, L). Williams had previously debated such an option before settling on Gerard Manley Hopkins for the 1958 Cheltenham Festival but was 'stumped for a singer'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 15 December 1957 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). The influence of Welsh verse on Manley Hopkins's own poetry falls beyond the scope of the present work, but Williams was fully aware of the poems possessing 'many Welsh characteristics of rhythm + rhyme'; see her letter to Enid Parry, 20 May 1958 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

8 Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962. Although Williams's primary friendship was with Parry's wife, Enid, she knew him well and had previously collaborated with him on her *Six Welsh Oxen Songs* (1937), for which he supplied additional lyrics.

adequately capitalise on its cultural assets:

You [Enid Parry] point out that English people have made English translations of foreign masterpieces. Yes of course. Why? Because the foreign countries in question have let it be known that they have masterpieces in their literature. Whether it is the fault of English people or not for not knowing that there are masterpieces of Welsh literature is beside the point. They don't know. In this case the mountain ought to go to Mohamet [*sic.*]<sup>9</sup>

The flexibility that Williams had been able to afford her orchestral *Penillion* of 1955 was never going to be permissible within the bounds of a commission title that specified the traditional art's primary use as a formal device.<sup>10</sup> This rigid requirement seems unlikely to have worried her unduly, however, and it is worthwhile to note that elements of *penillion* form are discernible in her earlier setting of the Scottish ballad *The Lament of the Border Widow* (1952).<sup>11</sup> The first two, fourth, and last two of the seven stanzas are conventional enough, being repeated statements of a decorated vocal melody (the 'air') over a harmonically varied but rhythmically simple piano accompaniment. The third and fifth, however, transfer the air to the piano and grant the singer a seemingly independent and improvisatory line, with particularly declamatory wide leaps in the fifth, that begins each of its phrases very shortly after the corresponding phrase of the air.<sup>12</sup> Inconsistency in application prevents *The Lament of the Border Widow* being described as a work in true *penillion* style and Williams never acknowledged it as such, but there is enough similarity to suppose some degree of influence; conscious or otherwise.

No such ambiguity surrounds the formal analysis of *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*, despite Williams having described them as 'certainly influenced by *Penillion* but cut adrift'<sup>13</sup> and adding that the BBC's stipulation had 'added to the difficulties' of composition.<sup>14</sup> Each movement features an immediately identifiable, non-traditional melody that functions as the *cainc*; first presented in each instance without any accompanying counterpoint before the singer enters shortly after the beginning of the subsequent re-statement. The manner in which the *cainc* is

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9 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 26 December 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

10 A discussion of the form's rigidity (or lack thereof) in *Penillion* itself follows later in this chapter; see pp. 96-100. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it must be presumed that the idea to place *penillion* form in an orchestral setting was purely Williams's own.

11 This work was composed as one of a group of ballad settings – the others being *Willie's Lyke-Wake*, *Proud Lady Margaret* and probably *The Riddling Knight* – all printed in Arthur Quiller-Couch, *The Oxford Book of Ballads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910); see Grace Williams, letters to Mansel Thomas, 5 June 1952 and 11 May 1953 (BBC WAC, D).

12 Unusually wide vocal leaps (often a tenth or more) are, however, characteristic of Williams's writing more generally.

13 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 26 September 1962 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

14 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 25 February 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1469).



treated thereafter varies from movement to movement but, in each case, it is repeated several times with only minor alterations to ensure a relatively close adherence to traditional *penillion* form. In the first movement ('Stafell Gynddylan'), the five-bar *cainc* is repeated four times without variation to underlie the first, second, fourth and fifth of Williams's chosen stanzas. The third and sixth (bars 16-20 and 31-36, the latter repeating the final line of text in the additional bar), however, are accompanied by material obviously related in rhythmic character and melodic shape to the *cainc* but with sub-phrases either extended or truncated freely. Similar practices occur in the second movement ('Hwiangerdd'), although the eight-bar *cainc*'s conclusion on a dominant chord slightly undermines the principles of melodic completion and its literal re-statement occurs only twice. The second of those is appended by a further four-bar phrase extension (bars 57-64; 65-68), and the remaining two entrances of the *cainc* melody (at bar 69 and 80) are soon each undermined by modulatory material which forces its elaboration. Like 'Stafell Gynddylan', 'Hwiangerdd' closes with a brief codetta based on the *cainc*'s essential characteristics.

The third and fourth movements of *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems* bear a rather less close resemblance to traditional *penillion* forms than the opening two. 'Claddu'r Bardd' (the fourth movement) is the easier to analyse for it has, at least, a melodically memorable *cainc* but, unlike 'Stafell Gynddylan' and 'Hwiangerdd', it shares phrases of the tune between harp and harpsichord. As a consequence, the precise moment of its conclusion seems uncertain: a situation not aided by the alternating chords of E minor and major that complete the statement. Assuming the opening ten bars to be the completed *cainc*, it is stated in full three times before the final third of the text is declaimed over music that, whilst clearly of the same harmonic stock, is hardly melodically related to the *cainc* itself. The third movement ('Boddi Maes Gwyddno'), however, dispels any notion that Williams's creativity was over-constrained by the formal boundaries of *penillion*.<sup>15</sup> Although a *cainc* – from the second beat of bar 90 to the first beat of bar 94 – is discernible, it comprises more a series of motifs than a complete air. This 'melody' is repeated exactly only once before being immediately dissected into its component parts and, with each new stanza, subjected to a series of modulations through rising semitones that would instantly dismiss it from purist traditions. Far more than the other three movements, 'Boddi Maes Gwyddno' relies on the ear's ability to identify the ornamental figurations of the harpsichord as related to the *cainc* ahead of any notion of variations above a fixed theme.

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15 Williams recalled that it also 'gave me far more trouble than all the rest put together', adding 'I daresay the fault lay in the choice of poem' which, in eight stanzas, was certainly the most ambitious selection of the four; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 25 February 1963 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1469).

Having identified a *cainc* in each of the poetry settings, other features of *penillion* singing are also clearly visible in the vocal part which, as Williams noted, is melodically 'independent of [harp and harpsichord]'.<sup>16</sup> Imitations of improvisation and declamation abound in the line's wide-leaping intervals and almost complete lack of melismas, whilst each stanza after the first (which follows a complete *cainc* statement) begins only after either the *cainc*, or material obviously related to it, has itself begun. In accordance with tradition, both voice and accompaniment usually cadence together at each *cainc*/stanza's close. This aspect of *penillion* methodology is less evident in the latter two movements, however, despite a greater use of melodic repetition in the vocal part of 'Claddu'r Bardd' than in any other movement.<sup>17</sup> Arguably, however, the set of principles to which Williams most strictly adhered were those of the natural stress patterns of spoken Welsh. The chosen poems could be effectively recited using Williams's rhythms whilst, perhaps more inventively, lilting tones of Welsh speech seem to be reflected in melodic figures that treat the emphasised syllable as an appoggiatura or accented passing note.<sup>18</sup> This stylistic fingerprint, though a feature of Williams's instrumental work since at least *Penillion* and probably earlier, is unmistakable when combined with actual text settings. Clearly audible in each of the songs, it is at its most obvious in slower passages where the rhythms are less pointed: witness, for instance, bars 16-17 and 24; 49 and 56; 96 and 98; and practically every bar of 'Claddu'r Bardd' (whose melody is all but defined by these gentle clashes).

Although perhaps the most significant benefit gained from *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*'s composition was the impact it had on Williams's self-belief, a more tangible result was the request from Osian Ellis for a further pair of songs for him to sing to his own harp accompaniment.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to the formal structural patterns of *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*, *Two Ninth-Century Welsh Poems* (1964) abandoned the principle of air and countermelody in favour of a clearer differentiation between melody and accompaniment; reverting instead to the performing force(s) of traditional *penillion*. The overt declamation of 'Eryr Pengwern', in fact, might also be considered reminiscent of the performing style of medieval poet-harpers. Two

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16 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 26 September 1962 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

17 Rhythmic differences apart, the three vocal stanzas of 'Claddu'r Bardd' are almost identical.

18 In Welsh linguistic terminology, this syllable is referred to as *y goben*, and its use as a melodic device is clearly related to Williams's existing fondness for lombard rhythms.

19 Very unusually, Williams still considered the work to be 'among the best things I've done' over a decade after completion; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 February 1976 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Ellis's commission came around the time of *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*'s premiere on 5 February 1963, but Williams made no start on it until a year later; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 9 February 1964 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).



*Gogonedawg Arglwydd* of twenty-five years previously: this time, having set the rhythms of the Welsh poem first, she was forced to still more creatively adapt 'A'th fendico seithniau a sêr' to 'And the seven nights' full radiance of stars.'<sup>24</sup>

More difficult to analyse than any one particular instance is Williams's general attitude towards translations from Welsh into English. It is certain that she had long been aware of the commercial necessity for such work,<sup>25</sup> but comments on Mathias's *Elegy for a Prince* (which used 'the language of the conqueror!') clearly imply that she found such a requirement regrettable.<sup>26</sup> Equally, however, she had previously provided her own translations for performance purposes of poetry by Saunders Lewis (*Carol Nadolig*: 'The Flower of Bethlehem'), Ieuan Ddu (*Yr Eos*: 'The Nightingale') and, most significantly, four further Welsh poets for David Wynne's *Chwe Chân i Denor a Thelyn*.<sup>27</sup> Despite having feared when first offered the work that 'to capture the formal beauty of the original' would be impossible,<sup>28</sup> and aware that at least one (unnamed) Welsh scholar had 'said they were untranslatable',<sup>29</sup> Williams's stated intention to 'try and convey as naturally as possible some of the imagery' is significant.<sup>30</sup> This sense of the 'natural' is most important: Williams prioritised literary beauty and the effective conveyance of text ('My English fits the music like a glove') above any concerns for literal meaning, dry academicism or the technical rigours of *cynghanedd*.<sup>31</sup> Translation, in essence, should not be done merely for its own sake as much as to complement or even enhance the effect of the original text.

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24 Williams had also consulted Parry on this occasion; see her letters of [undated] June 1939 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

25 'I'm afraid no publisher will look at [the *Oxen Songs*] unless there is an English translation'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [undated] 1934 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

26 Having attended the premiere performance, Williams returned home and 're-read the original + found it had just that extra power + homogeneity in its assonance + overall sound'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 12 June 1972 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Mathias had used Anthony Conran's translation of Gruffudd ab yr Ynad Coch's *Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gruffudd*.

27 Alongside one anonymous poem, Wynne had set Welsh verse by Dafydd Nanmor, Ieuan Fardd, Dafydd ap Gwilym and Maredydd ap Rhys.

28 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 16 July 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Parry had supplied Williams with a literal translation.

29 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] August 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1490).

30 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 16 July 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

31 'I know there's no *cynghanedd* [in her translations for Wynne] but there are inner rhymes + sound-matching + alliteration. I haven't been so pleased with anything I've done for ages!' Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 9 August 1966 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). Note also that, when considering Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* for performance in Welsh at the 1968 Eisteddfod, Williams felt 'it ought to be anything other than a literal translation'; see her letter to Enid Parry, [postmark] 31 January 1968 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

### **Songs without words: *Penillion* and *Ballads***

No such translation, of course, is required when literary concepts are conveyed through the medium of programme music that Williams had already used in *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon* (1939) and *Symphonic Impressions* (1943). Far more adventurous, however, would be Williams's later efforts to use Welsh literary forms to forge a style of otherwise abstract instrumental music; at least as definably connected to its country of origin as any straightforward accompaniment to narrative. Indeed, to successfully adapt the near-unique total synthesis between music and verse of *penillion* to a wholly new yet historically honourable context from which text was entirely absent could be considered a remarkable achievement.<sup>32</sup> *Penillion* (1955) itself, however, was not the first occasion for which Williams admitted having attempted to write an orchestral score inspired by the principles of *cerdd dant*. *David* (1951), Wales's sole contribution to the cinematic celebrations for the Festival of Britain, is accompanied by a score second in significance only to *Blue Scar* (1948) in Williams's catalogue. Although it may well have been its Eisteddfodic context that inspired her to write: 'I'm going all out on a sort of Penillion-style of strings writing – counterpoint to the rest of [the] orch[estra].', it is difficult to attach great import to this comment.<sup>33</sup> Only the music of *David*'s opening and closing sequences seems in any way to have been influenced by *penillion* singing, and those scarcely. The initial melody for unison strings, for example, is certainly declamatory and responded to with counterpoint from wind soloists, but its prominent harp accompaniment is purely chordal and there is nothing that could function as a repeated *cainc*. Any attempt to use *penillion* form to link the refrains of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau' which close the film and the contrasting line in upper strings played above them would be still more tenuous.

Williams's prefatory introduction to the published score of *Penillion*, however, makes it clear that this later work is connected to the ancient bardic art by more than its mere title:

This orchestral suite breaks with tradition in many respects: it does not include any Welsh airs, and there is not always a contrast between the Penillion and the accompaniment. Nevertheless, it retains the narrative style, stanza form, and many melodic and rhythmic characteristics of traditional Penillion.<sup>34</sup>

Of the three traits (narrative style, stanza form, and melodic/rhythmic characteristics), the first

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32 *The Times*'s accolade for *Penillion*'s Proms performance cited its 'direct and striking freshness – almost originality – without any revolutionary departures from tradition'; see anon., 'A Welsh Novelty', *The Times*, 14 August 1958, p. 12.

33 Grace Williams, letter to Mansel Thomas, [undated] February 1951 (BBC WAC, D). The film's scenes set at the Eisteddfod, however, contain no *penillion*, traditional or otherwise.

34 Grace Williams, introduction to *Penillion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

is the least possible to define absolutely for, as the composer herself admitted, 'what is being related is anyone's guess.'<sup>35</sup> Williams never acknowledged any specific examples of literary inspiration, and the only similarly analogous connection that can be made is that between the first movement (Moderato cantando) and a 'peaceful pastoral scene' with the opening trumpet solo 'ringing out from a mountain top'.<sup>36</sup> Nancy Werner, who analyses 'typical' *cerdd dant* rhythms in some detail, observes that both the lombard rhythms of the aforementioned feminine word-ending and shorter, snappier figures (♩, ♪ and similar) are present throughout *Penillion*.<sup>37</sup> Williams herself later attributed the rhythms of the particularly arresting unison statement that opens the fourth movement (Allegro agitato) and the following violin melody (bars 5-15) to 'the rhythm of the old Welsh hwyl ... I heard from the pulpit several times when I was a child', but made no further allusions to explicit imitations of Welsh speech or practices.<sup>38</sup>

It is, however, the appropriation of stanza form that renders *Penillion* a suitably apt title for this particular work and that would be developed in later scores not otherwise associated with the art form of *cerdd dant*. This stanzaic structure comprises a repeated *cainc* and layers of improvisatory-style counterpoint: a central principle which is adhered to, with varying degrees of strictness, in each movement of *Penillion*. In addition, Williams often found it necessary to incorporate a third element of additional accompanying material that, whilst often forming thematic fragments, is usually restricted to supplying the harmonic support or rhythmic propulsion traditionally provided by the harp accompaniment. This avoidance of any kind of elaborate writing ensures no undue prominence that might conflict with the two traditional aspects of *penillion* singing. Such figuration, for example, comprises the opening bars of each movement of *Penillion*, in which neither *cainc* nor *datgeiniad* feature: an adaptation unthinkable in rigid interpretation of *cerdd dant* but necessary in an orchestral context. Werner's analysis of these sections interprets them each as the equivalent of the harp *cainc* that must begin any rendition of *cerdd dant*, which forces her to state that the entry of the melody

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35 Grace Williams, letter to Nancy Werner, 28 January 1977, quoted in Werner, 'Twentieth Century Musical Composition in Wales and its Relationship with Traditional Welsh Music' (MA dissertation, University College, Cardiff, 1977), p. 43. Werner later re-worked her conclusions about *Penillion* into her [writing as Esther R. Warkov] 'Traditional Features in Grace Williams's 'Penillion'', *Welsh Music*, VII:1 (Summer 1982), pp. 15-24; unless otherwise stated, all further citations from Werner's work refer to her MA dissertation.

36 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 13 November 1972 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1508). Interestingly, the opening shots of *David* (with their possibly-*penillion* influence) also show a rural Welsh view from a high point.

37 Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42. Werner does not, however, draw attention to these rhythms' frequent co-existence with harmonic subtlety in the manner of *appoggiaturas*.

38 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 13 November 1972 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1508). As far as can be determined, Williams did not elsewhere declare *hwyl* (the musical cadences employed by many Welsh orators when speaking with much fervour) to be an overt influence on any of her work.

which immediately follows must be that of the *datgeiniad*.<sup>39</sup> Whilst unquestionably a solo line, however, it is the ensuing melody that in each case is repeated several times to create the stanzas that form the movement's backbone: a function far more closely allied to that of the original *cainc*.<sup>40</sup> The following brief account of *Penillion*'s relationship with traditional *cerdd dant*, therefore, accepts the premise that each movement's repeated melody – rather than its opening bars and no matter how soloistic or declamatory its character – is functionally equivalent to the role of the accompanying harp air.

Of *Penillion*'s four movements, each based upon a different *cainc* and wholly contrasting in character, it is the first that adheres most closely to a rigid, *penillion*-based stanzaic structure. The *cainc*, a nineteen-bar melody first presented in the trumpet without contrapuntal commentary (bars 2-21: later versions are sometimes slightly extended or shortened), is heard a total of five times with the second to fifth each being accompanied by a clearly definable countermelody. This counterpoint is sometimes spread across several other instruments: in the third stanza (beginning at bar 42), for example, it passes between clarinet, flute, and first violins, no doubt to share melodic interest amongst the young musicians for whom *Penillion* was written. Though never marked as such, it is invariably as declamatory in character as the *cainc* itself, and varies from stanza to stanza in the manner of one freely improvising. The wide intervallic leaps and overall compass, however, ensure that it is evident that the 'improvisation' could hardly be intended to literally mimic that of a vocalist. By contrast, the restriction of the *cainc* to the range of a minor seventh – easily within the compass of a traditional air – can only have been intentional, and its greater variation in its third presentation (bars 42-61) creates an effective centrepiece to the movement. Williams's approach to varying the supposedly sacrosanct *cainc* is wholly indicative of her later practice in *Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*, whilst subtle rhythmic and melodic alterations (hints at a minor tonality in the third stanza, for example, or the tune's truncation in the fifth) never displace the theme's original character or that of the movement as a whole.

If the gently lilting lombard rhythms of the first movement's introductory bars (1-2) are reflected in the *cainc* that follows, the decisive off-beat accents of the second movement's (*Allego con fuoco*) tutti opening statement directly pre-empt those of its unifying melody.

39 Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41.

40 This argument is also supported by Delyth Haf Rees, in her 'The Orchestral Music of Grace Williams' (MA dissertation, University College of North Wales, 1981) and Malcolm Boyd, in his *Grace Williams* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1980), pp. 38-40. Werner makes no mention of these conflicting interpretations in her article for *Welsh Music* (*op. cit.*).

Unlike the first, this *cainc* is divided into two equal and very obviously definable halves separated by a brief but unusually dominant 'third element' of non-*penillion* material (bars 7-16; 16-21 [the two overlap]; 22-31). The movement further diverges from the traditional model in two other ways: the 'third element' is itself subjected to significant development via extension and additional intrusion into the *cainc* itself; and there are occasionally two distinctly different lines of *datgeiniad* counterpoint (e.g. bars 39-47 in Trumpet II and Oboe/Clarinet I).<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the clearly contrasting nature of *cainc* and *datgeiniad* material ensure that an association with *cerdd dant* is undeniable. Similarly powerful connections are evident throughout the third movement (Andante con tristezza), whose four further statements of the *cainc* after its initial presentation are each accompanied by an independent *datgeiniad* line. The fourth stanza is particularly interesting: the endings of each sub-phrase (e.g. bars 59-63) are prolonged by extending their final 'syllable' by a bar; whilst the counterpoint, rather than contemporaneously interacting with the main melody, functions more as a highly declamatory response to the *cainc*'s call.<sup>42</sup> In addition, and to an even greater extent than in the second movement, the 'third element' assumes a pivotal role by providing the two emotional climaxes at bars 56-59 and 90-93. Importantly, it, too, shares the essential rhythmic and melodic characteristics of the *cainc* from which it extends; notably its beginning on the same note upon which the previous phrase concluded and the repeated ♪♪ figures.

Only in the final movement (Allegro agitato) are the close links between Williams's score and traditional *cerdd dant* practice more questionable. Firstly, the almost all-pervading rhythm that opens the movement and recurs throughout seems scarcely related to the presumed-*cainc* which begins in bar 5, despite Williams's assertion that each shared the patterns of preached *hwyl*.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, there are at least two distinctly differing ideas that relate neither to *cainc* nor *datgeiniad* (the opening material and the arpeggiated figures first heard in bar 18); the oboe melody of bars 28-45 functions more as a second subject than any other structural device; and, when the *cainc* does re-appear in bar 60, two additional competing strands of counterpoint are superimposed simultaneously. Still more significantly, no further variations occur beyond a tentative re-statement of a single phrase of the *cainc* in bars 90-94. Whilst both *cainc* and *datgeiniad* are extant in the fourth movement, their presence is only truly discernible because of

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41 Whether the trumpet line can here be considered true melodic counterpoint rather than an accompanying fanfare figuration is perhaps debatable: depicting it as Williams's representation of the competitive nature of *penillion* singing need not necessarily be too far-fetched.

42 Similar effects in fact occur within the first movement (Clarinet I in response to Cor Anglais in bar 45, for example), but the rather more long-breathed character of that *cainc* renders their use less significant.

43 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 13 November 1972 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1508).



their centrality elsewhere. An unaccountable reneging on the *cerdd dant*-based promise of the previous three movements, the content of the fourth prevents this innovative technique from being a defining feature of the entire work despite the effective and emphatic closure.<sup>44</sup>

The notion of narrative development, not required in the poetry of traditional *penillion*, is inevitably brought into greater focus in a title as frank as *Ballads* (1968). English Victorian ballads had been present in Williams's mind at the outset of *Penillion*'s composition in 1954, but it was only in 1967 that she returned to the form as a basis for an orchestral work.<sup>45</sup> The key connection between the two scores is the stanzaic structure necessitated by each. Though not as self-definingly Welsh as the relationship between *cainc* and *datgeiniad*, Williams nonetheless drew similar comparisons in her programme note:

[I]n each of the four ballads, the basic form is very simple. A melodic stanza, repeated several times, with varying harmony, gives rise to much contrapuntal commentary. As one would expect, the ballads have a narrative style, yet what they narrate is anyone's guess. The melodic line of the first shows traces of the rhythmic characteristics and the rise + fall of Welsh oratory. The second, a terse + solemn march, has an affinity with the kind of Lament (*Marwnad*) that one finds in in [*sic.*] Medieval Welsh poetry. The third is peaceful; but there are three, short interruptions: the first a mere ruffling of the surface; the second a sudden, violent outburst; + the third – very short – a muted reminiscence. Peace prevails and the ballad ends very quietly. The final ballad is fast and furious (pausing only once for reflection). It could be a graphic description of a dance – or a tournament – or a chase – or what you will. (The music of these ballads may well have sprung from several extraneous sources. But once it had got going it was the music alone that occupied the composer's mind.)<sup>46</sup>

Williams's earliest thoughts concerning the commission also imagined 'a synthesis of medieval Welsh laments, proclamations, feasts, [and] combat'<sup>47</sup> and a direct re-invigoration of *penillion* form: 'I want a narrative poem ... that perhaps cd. be sung in Penillion style (with orchestra replacing harp – playing my music, not a traditional tune)'.<sup>48</sup> Although her later references to

44 Williams later attributed the abandonment of stanza form in the last movement to her simply having had 'just too much of [it]' and becoming so frustrated that '[I] thought I'd never finish'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] March 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

45 Whilst working as a freelance copyist, Williams had been to commissioned to orchestrate a series of 'Victorian ballads ... The most awful thing is that in the middle of it I've got the idea for a new work – Penillion for Orchestra – I've been ruminating on Penillion for years'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 26 September 1954 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1424). She had also set a group of four Scottish ballads a year previously, and would use Vernon Watkins's *The Ballad of the Trial of Sodom* as the culmination of her incidental music for *The Lovely Gift of the Gab*: an anthology of Welsh poetry presented by the Welsh Theatre Company at the 1965 Commonwealth Arts Festival.

46 Grace Williams, explanatory introduction (labelled 'Programme Note') to score of *Ballads*, 1968 (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, A17/1). Note the phrase 'what they narrate is anyone's guess' and its obvious similarity to Williams's comment on *Penillion* in her letter to Nancy Werner, 28 January 1977, quoted in Werner, *op. cit.*, p. 43; see p. 97 above.

47 Grace Williams, letter to Vivien Cutting, 28-29 November 1967 (cited in Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 41: the original Williams-Cutting correspondence is now lost).

48 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 30 April 1967 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued). This letter also reveals that Williams was longing for 'Welsh equivalents of the Border Ballads', but could not find a suitable text. The terms of the original commission specified a ten-minute work for SATB soloists and orchestra, but

the myriad of influences on *Ballads* add jazz and the 'Pop art of past + present', the rooting of the resultant work in more traditional art forms is thus undeniable.<sup>49</sup>

Whilst it is stanza form that most closely links *Ballads* with *Penillion*, the two specific relationships between passages from it and the Welsh influences cited by Williams are both worthy of brief comment. The lombard rhythms and feminine accents of the principal theme of the first movement (Allegro moderato, alla canzone) are no doubt Williams's interpretation of Welsh oratory's 'rhythmic characteristics' as seen in earlier works, but the 'arch' shape and very clear rises and falls of the sub-phrases are peculiar to this theme and perhaps reminiscent of pulpit *hwyl*.<sup>50</sup> Quite how the 'tune' of the second movement, however – a melody described by Boyd as both 'Mahlerian' and 'banal' – can be convincingly linked with the medieval *marwnad* is rather more unclear.<sup>51</sup> Though its terseness is undoubted, its musical suitability as accompaniment to an elegaic praise-poem is certainly questionable. Furthermore, the striking rhythmic characteristic of the melody is the Scotch snap: a motif far more pointed than the softer short-long rhythms of the first movement and elsewhere. More surprising, however, is that Williams's use of stanza form with the restrictions of *cerdd dant* practice lifted is, to some extent, more rigid in *Ballads* than *Penillion*. The uniting theme of each movement is thus almost invariably repeated more literally than had been the *cainc*, with fewer truncations or alterations in pitch. The treatment of the *datgeiniad*, however, completely departs from its predecessor. It is sometimes present even during the first statement of the theme; its material is often imitative rather than independent (N.B. the first movement's passage in canon, beginning at bar 45); and, perhaps most significantly, its fragmentary (albeit improvisatory) nature ensures that it can scarcely be considered as true counterpoint as much as mere commentary. In addition, the third and fourth movements (Andante calmante and Allegro furioso) both feature disruptive passages that wholly contrast with the character of their main themes in a manner more striking than Williams's use of the 'third element' in *Penillion*.

Perhaps the most important judgement to be made concerning Williams's use of stanza form –

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no objection to the change of emphasis seems to have been raised.

49 Grace Williams, letters to Elizabeth Maconchy, 7 November 1967 and 14 February 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The eventual decision to score *Ballads* for orchestra alone was made after a chance hearing of two radio programmes of Greek music: one of popular songs and one of unidentifiable works ('ballads') by Mikis Theodorakis; see Grace Williams, letters to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] August 1967 and 20 October 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

50 It cannot be stated with certainty whether this is the kind of oratory that Williams meant, but her exposure to it as a child has already been noted in the context of *Penillion*.

51 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

either in true *penillion* style or a free interpretation of it – is whether it contributed to a limitation of her natural style of composition or liberation from pre-existing difficulties with large-scale structural cohesion.<sup>52</sup> Whilst immediately providing a formal layout around which to build inspiration, stanza form also had the potential to inhibit leaps of imagination: a difficulty Williams encountered in the last movement of *Penillion* and first of *Ballads*.<sup>53</sup> The requirement for the *datgeiniad* to appear improvised, however, surely aided the necessary appearance of spontaneity, despite the need for a certain level of empathetic participation on the behalf of either work's performers:

I've never understood why my music which is so old hat always gives trouble at the start – I suppose it's all the solo counterpoint which has to sound spontaneous yet must click into place – + must sound convincing (even tho' the players find it meaningless)<sup>54</sup>

With ideal performing conditions, however, this unique interplay with tradition renders both *Penillion* and *Ballads* as representatively Welsh as any composition openly reliant upon text to convey nationality: that their forms have not been widely imitated by other Welsh composers perhaps indicates a degree of reverence towards Williams's success.

### **Final thoughts: *Castell Caernarfon* and *Missa Cambrensis***

For reasons that cannot be convincingly explained, but probably owe as much to a general reduction in output as any conscious decision, Williams only twice returned to identifiably Welsh inspiration for her major works after the completion of *Ballads* in 1968.<sup>55</sup> At first glance, little would seem to connect *Castell Caernarfon* (1969) and *Missa Cambrensis* (completed in 1971, but begun in 1968) – the former can hardly be compared to the latter in terms of scale or ambition – yet the proximity of their composition and 'Welshness' of their titles renders comment inevitable. Neither work uses stanza/*penillion* form and, whilst the Welsh language

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52 This accusation has been levelled particularly at *Symphonic Impressions* but also at the Violin Concerto: the two most substantial works (alongside *Sinfonia Concertante*) composed before *Penillion* in 1955; see both Boyd, *op. cit.* p. 25 and 31 and the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007).

53 'I have at last finished my first Ballad – ready to score. It took far longer than the others. The same thing happened with *Penillion* – I'd had just too much of the stanza form + thought I'd never finish the last mvt[.].'; see Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] March 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued) and footnote 44, p. 100 above.

54 Grace Williams, letter to Charles Groves, 5 August 1968 (NLW, Sir Charles Groves Papers, A3/1): Williams was complaining about the approach of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to *Ballads*'s premiere. Of *Penillion*, Williams similarly complained that the opening trumpet solo was 'never declamatory enough'; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 13 November 1972 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1508).

55 *Marwnad Cynddylan*, by virtue of its very short duration (26 bars) and the paucity of documentation surrounding it, can hardly be considered in the same vein as *Missa Cambrensis* and *Castell Caernarfon*; for details of the circumstances of its composition, see Chapter I of the present study, p. 28. Only *Ye Highlands and ye Lowlands*, *Ave Maris Stella*, the two choruses *Harp Song of the Dane Women* and *To Sea! To Sea!*, *Fairest of Stars* and *My Last Duchess* separate *Missa Cambrensis* from the composer's death.

does feature in *Missa Cambrensis*, its presence is dwarfed by the volume of the Latin mass text. Given that any further national influence discernible in each can only be defined very tentatively – and that the works themselves can hardly be considered to be objectively Welsh – how, then, did Williams justify the distinction present in their titles and/or programmes?

By adopting a heading rooted in Welsh history and landscape for her final work for orchestra alone, it might initially be inferred that Williams was acting regressively in returning to a period of compositional inspiration long since abandoned in favour of more original means of expression.<sup>56</sup> To do so, however, would obscure the fact that the 'Castell Caernarfon' title was only imposed on the work in the months after its premiere: beforehand, it had been simply known as 'Investiture Processional Music' or 'Prelude and Processional'.<sup>57</sup> Each phrase not only acknowledges the score's functional nature but Williams's own semi-tradition of writing works based on ceremonial passage, from that of Pryderi in *Rhiannon* and Glyndŵr in *Symphonic Impressions* to the abstract orchestral *Processional* of 1962. Despite this seeming functionality, the fact that the work was conceived as being in its very nature Welsh is clear in Williams's own words, written between the score's completion in March 1969 and its premiere on 1 July:

I myself have lost all enthusiasm for [the politics of the Investiture] – yet when they asked me to write Processional music I was all for it + felt it was a marvellous opportunity to make the world familiar with our character, history, traditions + it was in that spirit that I wrote my music. It's Welsh. But I feel now that the majority of Welsh listeners won't recognise its Welshness let alone anyone else.<sup>58</sup>

Later, assuming that she made no belated attempt to claim inspiration not originally present, Williams further elucidated her sources. After first stating that the opening Prelude was 'evocative of a remote Welsh mountain scene' before the music descended 'from the mountains to the castle precincts', she continued:

The whole work was written in the hope that the music would be recognised as springing spontaneously from Welsh sources. The composer's thoughts had been concentrating on the rhythms and cadences of Welsh poetry and oratory, the medieval legends of the Mabinogion, and the atmosphere of Welsh castles – particularly that of Carnarvon [*sic.*] (the home of her father's family.) [...] She wanted to pay tribute, as best she could, to a proud nation's ancient history, so full of contrasts: at times harsh and ruthless, at times rejoicing in spontaneous lyricism.<sup>59</sup>

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56 C.f. *Four Illustrations for the Legend of Rhiannon* (1939), *Symphonic Impressions* (1943) and *Sea Sketches* (1944).

57 Of the two, 'Investiture Processional Music' seems to have been the more prominent, with 'Prelude and Processional' appearing only on the front cover of Williams's rough score (BL Add. MS 59813). The music of the Investiture ceremony itself was intended to support the royal festivities rather than assume a position of prominence and, as such, neither a true title or programme note were required.

58 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 23 May 1969 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

59 Grace Williams (writing in the third person), programme note for an unspecified performance of *Castell Caernarfon*, [undated] 1970s (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, A18/6).

These passages represent a significant departure from Williams's descriptions of previous works, which had almost invariably made at least some allusion to specific influences of Welsh culture on the concept behind either the whole score or particular movements/passages. Furthermore, though specifying little about the manner in which the national association was being evoked, both quotes in fact represent Williams's most explicit statements of intent and are the only ones to apply to a work self-identified as 'Welsh' beyond title, language or structure. Her language seems to rejoice in its vagueness and imply that the entirety of *Castell Caernarfon* is somehow imbued with the spirit of the Welsh nation and its people. Neither is this view limited to the composer, with Malcolm Boyd crediting it alongside *Penillion* and *Ballads* (both of which would seem to have more immediate claims) as a work that is inherently Welsh.<sup>60</sup> To justify such pronouncements completely and independently would be beyond the scope of the present work, but a constructive comparison can be made with a similarly semi-functional and roughly contemporaneous orchestral score: *Processional*.<sup>61</sup> Features of Williams's composing style identified by the composer herself as being of Welsh origin might at least be more prominent in the later work if not absent in the earlier. In contrast, to find the contrary would suggest that they were more characteristics of her evolving natural writing shared by many of her works than independent devices of intentional 'Welsh' expression.

Though commissioned by a Welsh institution (the Llandaff Festival), there is nothing in Williams's surviving correspondence to suggest any quasi-nationalistic inflection having been imposed upon *Processional*'s music. Indeed, her introductory note indicates merely that 'the prevailing thought behind the music is of the solemnity + grandeur of ecclesiastical processions.'<sup>62</sup> It and the main body of *Castell Caernarfon*, however, share many of their most characteristic features from the outset, with both opening with the Scotch snap/appoggiatura motif of a rising semitone into a note of the prevailing harmony.<sup>63</sup> Each also grants its first true melodic material to a solo trumpet, and although it is only in the score of *Castell Caernarfon* that it is specifically marked as declamatory, both are characterised by the same sharp rhythms

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60 See, for example, his comment that 'the Welshness of ... *Castell Caernarfon* is no longer dependant on ... outward trappings' (*op. cit.*, p. 36).

61 Though never intended for physical procession, the title of the work alone permits its comparison with *Castell Caernarfon*. Although it is impossible to prove that Williams conceived *Processional* as a wholly abstract work, the lack of evidence to the contrary (given the volume of reference material available) remains significant.

62 Grace Williams, explanatory introduction (labelled 'Programme note') to score of *Processional*, 1962 (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, A15/1).

63 It might be argued that cadences of Welsh poetry are already evident throughout *Castell Caernarfon*'s Prelude, where the call and distant echo of the solo oboes are ridden with the appoggiaturas already noted as being characteristic of Williams's interpretation of *cerdd dant*.

and simple, stepwise movement. Essentially, if ideas founded in confident, spontaneous declamation are generally more prominent in the later score, the rhythmic and melodic patterns of Welsh speech form the core of the solo lines and accompanying figures of both works.<sup>64</sup> It is thus challenging to find any evidence beyond the above-quoted letters which would support an assertion that the musical content of one was any more 'Welsh' in Williams's mindset than the other. (In much the same fashion, it has already been noted that *Sinfonia Concertante* shares key musical characteristics with *Symphonic Impressions* and *Sea Sketches* despite only the latter two claiming to be Wales-inspired.) This would support the assertion that these features formed part of a naturally evolving musical language common to more than one of Williams's late orchestral works, rather than a style imposed upon a score to justify its title or subject matter.

*Missa Cambrensis*, Williams's most extended work with the exception of *The Parlour*, was also the last to openly allude to having been inspired by Wales. The origins of the title itself are unknown – Herbert Howells's *Missa Sabrinensis* may have been one model – but it is certain that it was already in place when Williams formally accepted the Llandaff Festival's commission in June 1968.<sup>65</sup> In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, the 'Cambrensis' stipulation can be presumed to be of her own devising.<sup>66</sup> Neither is it clear precisely how Williams intended to interpret her title in her music: she seemingly consciously rejected any suggestion that the work be written using a Welsh primary text,<sup>67</sup> and it is possible that she felt the very notion of combining it with Latin was still an insoluble proposal in non-conformist Wales.<sup>68</sup>

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64 The tutti interpolations that punctuate the soloist(s)'s lines in *Castell Caernarfon* – clearly unrelated to *cerdd dant* practice, which requires both to play simultaneously – were said by Williams to represent 'cries of approval from a vast crowd, even from the crowds at the Investiture itself'; see her programme note for an unspecified performance, [undated] 1970s (NLW, Grace Williams Music Manuscripts, A18/6).

65 Given that Williams had once referred to Howells as an 'awful little squirt', it seems unlikely that any similarity in the titles was in any way a tribute; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 26 February 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1390). Giraldus Cambrensis, who preached at Llandaff in the twelfth century, is perhaps a more likely source.

66 The Llandaff Festival had in fact offered Williams a 'carte blanche' commission for either 1967 or 1968 but pre-occupied with thoughts of another opera, Williams delayed her acceptance for a whole two years and settled on the mass's title during the intervening period; see her letters to Elizabeth Maconchy, 6 June 1966 and 17 June 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The latter is the second known reference to the work but the first to refer to it as anything other than 'a mass'; for which see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] March 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

67 Williams had originally suggested *Missa Cambrensis* ('in Latin') as an alternative to the BBC's suggestion of a work based on Tom Parry's *Llywelyn Fawr*; but was overruled; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 June 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued) and Chapter II, p. 60 of the present work.

68 Note Williams's comments on Arwel Hughes's *Gweddi*: '[I]t's so many centuries since Welsh people prayed in Latin that the mixture seems wrong'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, [postmark] 13 February 1945 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

Although certain of the features already identified as being of Welsh linguistic origin are undeniably present in the work's first two movements – the lombard rhythms of the pleas of 'Kyrie eleison', for example – there is rather less that could be described as declamatory. Indeed, the winding chromaticism and quintuplet figures of the very opening are far more reminiscent of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* than the atmosphere or techniques of *canu penillion*. The final two movements each begin with characteristic ♯♯.♭ appoggiaturas, and the impassioned cries of 'Agnus Dei' are certainly syllabically declaimed, but the inflexible nature and undoubted musical heritage of the liturgy seem to have prevented some of the spontaneity inherent in *Castell Caernarfon* and earlier stanzaic works.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, in much the same way as *Castell Caernarfon* has much in common with *Processional*, these features are not confined solely to choral works that purport (in title, at least) to be especially Welsh. *Carmina Avium* (1967), the rather earlier *All Seasons shall be Sweet* (1959) and, especially, *Ave Maris Stella* (1973; note particularly the build up to figure 3 and figure 9) all include prominent examples of forward motion propelled by lombardic appoggiaturas and are as representative of Williams's mature voice as *Missa Cambrensis*. Without an extensive statistical analysis, it is impossible to convincingly establish whether such devices occur more frequently in the latter work than the others but, even were this to be the case, it could be convincingly argued that this meant nothing more than up-scaled compositional and motivic planning.

It is, therefore, upon the Credo (the only movement of the completed score to contain any Welsh text) that the principal burden of responsibility for justifying the mass's title has to fall. Its two Welsh interpolations – a re-arrangement of Williams's *Carol Nadolig* (Saunders Lewis) and a narration of the Beatitudes – interrupt a mood of overwhelming solemnity, and have wholly divided commentators. Compare, for example, the views of Malcolm Boyd –

[They] fail to achieve what was evidently intended, or at best elicit an ambivalent response .... though textually appropriate ... [the effect of *Carol Nadolig*] is distracting, and this is also true of the reading in Welsh of the Beatitudes .... [They] fail mainly because the music is feeble in comparison with the rest of the work and because they are not essential to its conception in the way that the [Wilfred] Owen poems are essential to Britten's conception in the *War Requiem*. Their omission could easily be effected and would greatly improve the overall shape of the section.<sup>70</sup>

– with those of the two most well-known critics present at the premiere, Kenneth Loveland and Gerald Larner:

69 *Ballads*, in fact, can hardly be classed as an earlier work, having been written during breaks in the composition of *Missa Cambrensis*. Given the frustration Williams had expressed with stanza form at the time, it is perhaps not surprising that it makes no appearance in the latter work.

70 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

The narrative relevance of these departures ... is never really strong and the composer's unmistakably personal style ... really gives the work its native colour.<sup>71</sup>

It is, in fact, these Welsh interpolations which not only make it a Welsh Mass but which also rescue it as a work of music .... There is far too much mildly poetic prayer in vaguely moderate tempo with apparently little thought for variety. But ... [the interpolations] refresh the interest and keep one listening.<sup>72</sup>

That there is a difference of critical opinion concerning the effectiveness of the two passages is not overly surprising; that Lerner and Loveland should dispute whether they contribute effectively towards *Missa Cambrensis*'s Welsh title is perhaps more so. If evidentially supported, Loveland's contention that Williams's compositional style alone is sufficient for the work to be considered musically Welsh would have particularly far-reaching implications. It could, indeed, clearly lead to the conclusion that she had so completely integrated a nation's character into her music that it is always discernible even without any of the trappings of folk song, historical narrative and/or structures and motives based on language. He fails, however, to justify his implied equivocation of the terms 'personal' and 'native', seeming to suggest that any piece Williams wrote in a vaguely consistent style would automatically be considered inherently Welsh even without the composer's own backing for such a statement. When thus considering in what light Williams considered *Castell Caernarfon* and *Missa Cambrensis* to be Welsh, therefore – the main thrust of this section of the present work – it can be usefully borne in mind that her first outline for the Mass's Credo envisaged that a mere orchestral quotation from her own *Carol Nadolig* (1955) would be sufficient to justify the national attribution.<sup>73</sup> And, if quotation alone is sufficient, it is perhaps alongside (or as a direct development of) Williams's pre-1951 works that *Missa Cambrensis* at least should be considered, rather than being placed at the apogee of all her works whose titles directly reflect their Welsh melodic/linguistic content, structure or subject matter.

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71 Kenneth Loveland, 'Llandaff Festival', *The Times*, 18 June 1971, p. 7. Somewhat unaccountably, Loveland opens his review by stating that the 'Welsh implications of the title are partly centred on the composer's structural pattern, which is also autobiographical': it certainly seems questionable that he could have obtained such a statement from the composer herself.

72 Gerald Lerner, 'Missa Cambrensis at Llandaff', *The Guardian*, 17 June 1971, p. 10.

73 Neither of the two Welsh textual interpolations featured in her draft outline submitted to Elizabeth Maconchy for approval; see her letter of 30 October 1969 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued), which says of her idea for an orchestral quotation 'so I shall be able to call it *Missa Cambrensis*!'





## Chapter V

# HOW WELSH IS WELSH MUSIC?

External factors shaping Grace Williams's reception

'no hope for young composers who boast that they'll have no truck with the past + won't let themselves be influenced by anyone'

(Grace Williams to Elizabeth Maconchy, 1967)



The title of this chapter, taken from an article written by Grace Williams, is in fact something of a misnomer; for the rich seam of questions it provokes have already been profitably mined by various (and inevitably Welsh) musicologists during the past forty years.<sup>1</sup> Quite aside from Nancy Werner's study, Pwyll ap Siôn and Geraint Lewis have each compared Williams's *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* with *Penillion* as examples of a developing brand of inherently Welsh music.<sup>2</sup> There is also no wholehearted consensus on what should qualify as 'Welshness': even a matter so seemingly incontrovertible as Williams's allusion to Welsh speech patterns in *Penillion* (and in various subsequent works) has been viewed differently by a figure as significant as David Vaughan Thomas.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the description of Williams as a 'Welsh composer' has inevitably accompanied publicly available accounts of any aspect of her life and/or work, and implicitly seems to recognise something more than the location of her place of birth. To a certain extent, it implies a distinction between composers of Welsh and English (or Scottish/Irish/French etc.) nationality that owes as much to practical circumstance as to any commonalities in musical language. This final chapter, therefore, seeks to assess the cumulative effect of Williams's experiences of Wales on her understanding of the impact of nationhood upon her life, her works, and her perception by others.

The situation outlined above raises inevitable questions concerning to what extent the composer herself remains responsible for the description, and whether it would better be analysed as an external imposition from commissioners, performers, critics and/or public opinion. A statistically impregnable response would, however, be all but impossible to provide, not least because of the interweaving relationships between a composition's subject matter and the competing or complementary requirements of its commissioner, composer and commentators. This 'third sector' comprises both those who assert approval or otherwise merely by their

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- 1 Although published as 'How Welsh is Welsh Music?', *Welsh Music*, IV:4 (Summer 1973), pp. 7-12, most if not all of Williams's text was originally prepared as her submission to Meic Stephens (ed.), *Artists in Wales 2* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1971) but was rejected on the grounds that its content was insufficiently autobiographical; see correspondence between Williams and Stephens, February 1970 – October 1972 (NLW, Meic Stephens Collection, 1/57-59 and WMIC, uncatalogued).
  - 2 Nancy Werner, 'Twentieth Century Musical Composition in Wales and its Relationship with Traditional Welsh Music' (MA dissertation, University College, Cardiff, 1977; especially p. 43); Geraint Lewis, 'Welsh' Music', *Welsh Music*, VII:2 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 6-19; Pwyll ap Siôn, 'Cenedligrwydd a'r Cyfansoddwr Cymreig', *Welsh Music History*, VII (2007), pp. 265-284.
  - 3 Vaughan Thomas denied that the resultant rhythms were 'characteristically Welsh. They ... arise through the poets of [the post-Tudor] period trying to adapt English + continental "free" metres to the Welsh language.'; see his letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1959 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, CC6/1/5). Copies of Jones's questionnaire had been sent by Jones to each of Grace Williams, William Mathias, Kenneth Harding, David Vaughan Thomas, Arwel Hughes and Mansel Thomas in preparation for his lecture entitled 'Welsh composers of today', subsequently adapted for the BBC as *Music in Wales: an aspect of the relationship between art and the people* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1961).

presence as a concert audience and those whose influence (via written criticism, for instance) is less direct. Though scarcely an acknowledged participant in the compositional process, its impact can hardly be overstated. It is arguable, in fact, that its contributors' independence and freedom of expression could have held greater significance for Welsh musicians than organisations forced to restrict themselves either by budget or policy.

### **Amateurs and Audiences**

It is surely inevitable that no composer can be immune to the peculiar social and musical circumstances of their local and national audiences, whether of the concert hall or media receiver. In Wales, geographical challenges and an economy rooted in subsistence agriculture and low-paid industrial labour had contributed heavily to a nation largely bereft of the influence of instrumental music beyond the brass band and for whom the voice reigned supreme.<sup>4</sup> The associated passion for amateur choirs caused Williams twin dilemmas: whether to compromise her advanced musical language for the sake of a likely increase in performances and, more speculatively, whether a focus upon the writing of choral works would do little more than fulfil a pre-existing national stereotype to the detriment of wider appreciation.<sup>5</sup> By 1960, the two continuing issues had created an uneasy compromise, with Williams accepting that her style of choral writing 'fell between two stools' ('inevitable when we write for Welsh choirs') in attempting to marry her natural style with one that might be considered more popular or practical.<sup>6</sup> Quite aside from the somewhat unsatisfactory nature of such a position, the consequent scarcity of choral works within her output served to create a situation in which 'Wales will persist in thinking I know nothing about voices.'<sup>7</sup> In the meantime, however, Williams had acknowledged her nation's non-professional vocal heritage by successively exploring the incorporation of folk song, hymnody and *canu penillion* into her instrumental works. It is no doubt this gradual process that culminated in her 1959 statement that 'Welshness

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4 This situation began to change, of course, with the establishment in the 1920s of the Welsh National Council of Music and appointment of Henry Walford Davies as its Director; see David Ian Allsobrook, *Music for Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992). Williams flatly refused to compose for brass band, despite the pleas of Bram Gay (for whom she had written the Trumpet Concerto) and his offer of the chance of publication by Novello's; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 15 February 1974 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). No doubt Gay's search for 'a medley of trad. Welsh songs suitable for bands to play at football matches' (*ibid.*) was sufficiently off-putting.

5 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 5 April 1940 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1392). Williams felt that 'it's good for [Welsh composers] to stay away from [vocal music] when [they] are young', and had written only one choral work, *Gogonedawg Arglwydd* (1939), since her graduation exercise at Cardiff in 1926.

6 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 1 November 1960 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1454).

7 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1959 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, CC6/1/2(3)). Between 1940 and 1960, only *The Dancers* and *All Seasons shall be Sweet* rank among significant examples of Williams's choral works. Furthermore, Wales's propensity for all-male or all-female ensembles meant that she did not write a substantial piece for mixed choir until 1967 (*Carmina Avium*).

chiefly in [my] music is singableness<sup>8</sup> and her contemporary frustration that English conductors interpreting her work often failed to do so correctly because they 'didn't sing a note'.<sup>9</sup>

The writing of an opera, however – perhaps the greatest artistic achievement in all vocal composition – was always going to prove challenging in a nation which possessed neither a permanent opera orchestra (until 1969) nor a venue suitably designed for the purpose. Furthermore, a perhaps still greater obstacle was the absence of a Welsh audience with the financial means or formal musical education that might have encouraged regular attendance. As such, although Williams's first thoughts (in 1930) of writing an opera pre-dated even the foundation of the Welsh National Opera Company (in 1946), their Welsh 'folk opera' subject matter could be interpreted as an attempt to address her perception of the rather limited demands of a local audience. In 1939, when the idea of *Twm o'r Nant* was first generated, she observed that in order to succeed '[t]he libretto would have to be English, of course, + amusing': hardly an expression of immersion in her subject matter for its own sake but an indication of perceived stifled creativity.<sup>10</sup> Previously quoted remarks regarding *Dic Penderyn* have similar overtones: 'my two distinct styles (the one I call my "plebs" style + the other the me that's a bit different) might crop up in the same work + that would be confusing.'<sup>11</sup> One might usefully compare this approach with that of Arwel Hughes to his second opera, *Serch yw'r Doctor*:

I've had a feeling for some time that we as Welsh Composers have been taking ourselves too seriously, trying to do things which are beyond our capabilities .... In "Serch yw'r Doctor" I have tried to be honest with myself and have not attempted to exceed my own powers. It is a light hearted piece which may prove to be useful in Wales in our present state of development.<sup>12</sup>

The apparent requirement that a work should need to be 'light-hearted' in order to succeed with Welsh audiences had, by the 1950s, left Williams feeling 'pretty lonely' amongst her countryfolk.<sup>13</sup> To compose a work of greater substance was, in her view, to resign oneself to the realisation that '[f]ew in Wales will grasp it' and risk audience disassociation and even disapproval.<sup>14</sup> This interpretation of the particular demands of the Welsh audience – despite

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8 *Ibid.*

9 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 10 October 1957 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1449).

10 Grace Williams, letter to Idris Lewis, 30 November 1939 (BBC WAC, B). The Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain and Arwel Hughes's notion of performing the latter's *Menna* in Welsh was scorned a decade later: 'however much one wants an opera in Welsh where is the cast coming from + where are the audiences coming from? Unless [Hughes] is writing it expressly for amateurs – to be performed in small halls.'; see Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

11 Grace Williams, letter to Enid Parry, 21 September 1949 (BUA, Enid Parry Papers, uncatalogued).

12 Arwel Hughes, letter to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1959 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, CC6/1/6).

13 Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, [postmark] 31 May 1951 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1419).

14 Williams was referring specifically to Daniel Jones's (subsequently destroyed) String Quartet No. 8, but the comment can clearly be extended to operatic music; see her letter to Daniel Jones, 4 February 1950 (NLW,

their not being an active participant in any commissioning process – was therefore making its mark upon Williams's compositional decisions within only a few years of her returning to Barry after war's end.

Perceptions of the level of Welsh audience maturity had evidently not improved by the time Williams's *The Parlour* was itself first performed in May 1966. Amid some debate between her, Bryan Balkwill (conductor) and John Moody (producer) concerning the timing of the final curtain closure, each held differing opinions about when the audience would applaud inappropriately but each considered them to be 'cretins'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Williams believed that even an opera's relatively uncontroversial subject matter could prevent its successful staging in Wales. Thus, aside from the relative severity of its musical language ('Welsh audiences w[oul]d. never take to it'), Thea Musgrave's *The Decision* was apparently unlikely to prove alluring to ticket buyers who 'come to the opera to get away from the mines'.<sup>16</sup> However, whether Williams's own twenty-year delay in writing an opera can be attributed more to a lack of audience maturity than financial support is, to an extent, beside the point. Of far greater import is the suggestion that, by the 1960s, she had abandoned even considering the possibility that *The Parlour* (or, by extension, any other major work) could achieve success beyond the Welsh border because 'no-one knows me'.<sup>17</sup> Despite having spent more than fifteen years working in London and compiling a list of influential correspondents, Williams believed that she had become pigeon-holed: associated with a region that possessed an identity so powerful that it could prevent her becoming as widely publicised amongst audiences as in high-level performing and composing circles.<sup>18</sup> If accurate, however, such a situation could hardly have been created by the wider public alone. Instead, evidence would need to be traced back to those with the power to influence national consciousness: those in the media whose views carried sufficient weight that their consequences might, on occasion, be more significant than had perhaps been intended.

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Daniel Jones Archive, AA1413).

15 '[The] conductor + producer ... both said "As soon as they see the curtain move they'll clap – because they are cretins." But I was pretty certain Welsh cretins wouldn't clap until they heard the tonic chord ...'; see Grace Williams, letter to Daniel Jones, 23 May 1966 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, AA1489).

16 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [postmark] 14 May 1968 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Musgrave's opera concerns itself with the predicament of a nineteenth-century Scottish miner, trapped in an accident and, though eventually rescued, subsequently dying at the surface.

17 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, [undated] October 1966 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Though referring specifically to London in this quote, this feeling of separation can surely be extended to the whole of England on the grounds that London, of all British cities, probably held the greatest opportunities for composers.

18 Williams's list of significant England-based contacts would have included Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughan Williams and senior BBC staff.

## Critics and Commentators

The contribution of the BBC and a selection of the more uniquely Welsh institutions (such as the Welsh Arts Council) in shaping public awareness of Williams's output has already been discussed elsewhere in the present work.<sup>19</sup> There can be little doubt, however, that other organisations, whose contact with the composer was less direct, similarly impacted upon her portrayal to the world at large. It is obvious, for example, that regional media outlets – the BBC Welsh Region foremost amongst them, but also a huge variety of printed titles from *Welsh Music* to the *Western Mail* – hold a vested interest in ensuring that the subject areas they cover are of particular interest to their local market. As such, the fact that material produced within Wales as a result of Williams's compositional successes often highlighted her nationality should come as little surprise. Being of only local distribution, however, it was unlikely to influence those to whom it was not immediately relevant. Of far greater significance would be any assessment that wider coverage sought to focus its critical analysis upon the same area already served by existing local publications: Williams's prominence as a Welsh composer rather than her position within British or even Western classical music as a whole. To judge whether such an approach to characterisation took place, two very brief case studies have been attempted that compare published critical responses to the premieres of Williams's Symphony No. 2 (in 1957; as an example of an abstract genre of international importance), *Six Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1958; her most substantial song cycle) and *The Parlour* (in 1966; adapted from a French short story).<sup>20</sup> In addition, a surface evaluation of the reviews of the few commercial recordings of Williams's works to have been issued during her lifetime has been prepared, also commenting on the couplings with which her works were issued and examining their likely intended market.

The review, by a presumably local correspondent, in *The Times* of Symphony No. 2 makes no mention of Williams's nationality in its headline ('Grace Williams's New Symphony') but, by its third paragraph, the reader is left in no doubt that her being Welsh is a key point of information.<sup>21</sup> Although identifying the symphony as 'the only work by a native composer

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19 This brief analysis concerns itself only with commentary made during Williams's lifetime, though it must be emphasised that many of the key traits identified could be considered to still influence public perception.

20 Both Symphony No. 2 and *The Parlour* were first performed by English conductors and orchestras (Hallé Orchestra under George Weldon; City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Bryan Balkwill). It is to be admitted that, as with practically all of Williams's major works, limited Welsh connections remain unavoidable: Symphony No. 2, for example, was a commission from the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain and first performed at the Swansea Festival of Music and the Arts; Gerard Manley Hopkins lived for a time in Wales and was influenced by its poetry; whilst *The Parlour* was another Arts Council commission and performed by a largely Welsh cast in Cardiff and Llandudno.

21 Anon., 'Grace Williams's New Symphony', *The Times* (early editions only), 12 October 1957, p. 8.



included in this year's programmes' responds to clear public interest, the claim that Williams had used 'metrical patterns which ... may be related to rhythms of Welsh folk music' certainly implies a greater frequency than would seem warranted.<sup>22</sup> John Amis's caustic review<sup>23</sup> of *Six Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins* is nationally neutral, whilst Colin Mason's article opener ('There is a strong Welsh representation at Cheltenham this year'), though wholly accurate, might have usefully provided a wider context by explaining that not one of the works performed used a Welsh folk melody or pictorial title.<sup>24</sup> Of the three works, however, it is *The Parlour* that seems to have been most dramatically publicised as Welsh. *The Observer* was again the only national paper to refrain from mentioning Williams's roots, and both *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* issued headlines referring to the work as a 'Welsh opera' in spite of its foundation in French literature.<sup>25</sup> The latter two each utilised their leading sentence to reinforce the nationality of its composer, whilst the *Telegraph* proceeded to compare *The Parlour* with Arwel Hughes's two operas before mentioning its billing alongside *Il Tabarro* or providing details of individual performers.<sup>26</sup> To allege that such coverage represents lazy journalism would be a gross exaggeration, but the fact remains that primary definition by place of birth (in the context of non-programmatic or otherwise nationally-inflected works) over-emphasises a non-musical division and inflicts it upon the newspapers' readership.

Record reviewers of Williams's music have been rather more limited than their concert-going counterparts in their opportunities to avoid resorting to nationality as a primary means of description. Seven relevant *Gramophone* reviews (summarised in the table overleaf) were issued during her lifetime and, of these, four could hardly not have acknowledged the fact that every work on the record in question was written by a Welsh composer, or that nationality had evidently been the overriding connecting factor in their compilation.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, of the

22 *Ibid.* The Swansea Festival of Music and the Arts's supposedly sincere commitment to Welsh music has often been questioned; see, for example, the comments in the present writer's 'Ambition Overshadowed: Grace Williams's symphonies evaluated' (MPhil dissertation, University of Wales, Bangor, 2007), pp. 43-51. It must be acknowledged that Williams herself refers to the rhythm of one melody being 'characteristically Welsh': a brief remark in an essay of nine hundred words; see her, programme note for Symphony No. 2 (Souvenir Programme – Tenth Swansea Festival of Music and the Arts, pp. 19-21).

23 '[S]he scarcely began to be aware of the problems of matching in musical imagination Hopkins's rhythms, assonances and poetic swiftness'; see John Amis, 'Cheltenham Novelties', *The Observer*, 20 July 1958, p. 12.

24 Colin Mason, 'The Cheltenham Festival', *The Guardian*, 17 July 1958, p.5. Alun Hoddinott's Harp Concerto and Ian Parrott's Cor Anglais Concerto each also received premieres in separate concerts.

25 Peter Heyworth, 'Revelations on the rostrum' [this title refers not to *The Parlour*; reviewed under the sub-heading 'Craftsmanlike', but to a London concert given by Pierre Boulez], *The Observer*, 15 May 1966, p. 25; anon., 'Welsh Opera to have Cardiff Premiere', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 April 1966, p. 19; anon., 'Naturalness of new Welsh Opera', *The Times*, 6 May 1966.

26 *Ibid.*

27 Given that almost every one of the records referred to was sponsored by a Welsh funding body (such as the Welsh Arts Council), this situation could hardly be considered surprising. The appendix to the present work

remaining three, one covered a release by the National Youth Orchestra of Wales and a second featured only the re-issue of *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes*: secondary concerns which rendered nationally-inflected comment inevitable.<sup>28</sup>

<b><i>Gramophone reviews of Grace Williams's music, 1906-77</i></b>				
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Grace Williams works included</b>	<b>Performers</b>	<b>Review author</b>	<b>Recording details</b>
XXVII:315 (Sept. 1949), p. 27	<i>Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes</i>	London Symphony Orchestra (cond. Mansel Thomas)	Trevor Harvey	Decca AK1999-2000
XXVIII:333 (Feb. 1951), p. 20	<i>Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes</i>	London Symphony Orchestra (cond. Mansel Thomas)	W.R. Anderson	Decca LX3025 [re-issue of Decca AK1999-2000]
XXXIII:385 (June 1955), p. 58	'À lauterbach'	Sophie Wyss, Maria Korchinska	Philip Hope-Wallace	Argo RG34
XLVII:555 (Aug. 1969), p.40	<i>Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes</i>	National Youth Orchestra of Wales (cond. Arthur Davison)	Trevor Harvey	Music for Pleasure SMFP2129
XLVIII:569 (Oct. 1970), p. 72	<i>Sea Sketches</i>	English Chamber Orchestra (cond. David Atherton)	Edward Greenfield	Decca SXL6468
XLIX:587 (April 1972), p.68	<i>Penillion</i>	Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (cond. Charles Groves)	Trevor Harvey	HMV ASD2739
LII:618 (Nov. 1974), p.82	<i>Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes</i> , <i>Trumpet Concerto</i> , <i>Carillons</i> , <i>Fairest of Stars</i>	Soloists, London Symphony Orchestra (cond. Charles Groves)	Trevor Harvey	HMV ASD3006

Certain trends, however, can still be distinguished amongst the comments of the critics, chief among which is surely the notion that composers born or residing in Wales can, in some indefinable manner, be insightfully referred to in the collective. To write 'I enjoy the Welsh more when they are being less ambitious' risks implying that a musical connection is evident between the works of the diverse composers in the sample group (the first nine issues of the Welsh Recorded Music Society), including Meirion Williams, David Vaughan Thomas, John Thomas ('Pencerdd Gwalia') and Daniel Jones.<sup>29</sup>

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contains full details of all Williams's works to have achieved commercial recording release.

28 The only review to mention nothing Wales-related was highly unlikely ever to do so in any case: Williams's arrangement of 'À lauterbach' was included on a disc of French folk songs alongside examples by numerous other British composers; see Philip Hope-Wallace, review of Argo RG34, *Gramophone*, XXXIII:385 (June 1955), p. 58.

29 Trevor Harvey, review of various WRMS records, *Gramophone*, XXVII:315 (September 1949), p. 27. The reviewer did, however, state that the collection 'should arouse the interest of Welshmen not only at home and abroad, but music-lovers in general.'

Also discernible is a tendency to refer to obvious musical references to a composer's nationality without providing a wider context, perhaps with the intention to provide a clear focal point for the review. For example, to state that *Fantasia* 'is a well-made example of a kind [of suite] much cultivated among "national" composers' first implies that Williams was a subscribing member of such a group; secondly glosses over her education in London and Vienna; and thirdly risks drawing attention away from the fact that her most substantial recent work had been an abstract Violin Concerto.<sup>30</sup> More interesting, however, is the following rather complimentary review of a recording of *Sea Sketches*:

[They] have obvious enough resemblances to Britten, not just Peter Grimes but in the stormy opening movement ("High Wind") to the accompaniment of *Les Illuminations*. Grace Williams dedicated the pieces to her parents "who had the good sense to set up home on the coast of Glamorgan", and whatever the derivations this is more than just atmosphere music, for an individual human response is continuously made clear. It may for example seem unpromising to base a piece on "Channel Sirens", but Grace Williams has made of her third piece something very tender, even sweet. There, I might say, there is no derivation whatever from the foghorn in Grimes.<sup>31</sup>

Here, instead of emphasising Williams's nationality or the obviously Welsh focus of the record (entitled 'Welsh String Music'), the reviewer places her music in a wider British context that invites the reader to sample the recording on its own, purely musical merits. The two references to *Peter Grimes* and Williams's negative reaction to them, however, invite further comment. Her statement that *Gramophone* 'traces most of [*Sea Sketches*] to Peter Grimes', followed by the comment 'Since S.S. was written during the war ....', represents an interpretation of the writer's words that may misrepresent their original motivation.<sup>32</sup> After believing for many years that she had struggled to be appreciated in her own right, she considered that the links to the better known work implied an accusation of imitation ahead of originality, despite the references to 'an individual human response' and clear denial in the review's closing remark. Though lacking an appreciation of the reviewer's use of musical terms of reference, Williams was perhaps justified in believing that these final words could usefully have added a) that the works' chronology would in any case have rendered such derivation impossible; and b) that the somewhat unusual choice of maritime sound source might therefore actually have been considered rather innovative.

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30 W.R. Anderson, review of Decca LX3025, *Gramophone*, XXVIII:333 (February 1951), p. 20. Although the Violin Concerto does quote from 'Hen Dderbi', it seems unlikely that the reviewer was aware of its existence.

31 Edward Greenfield, review of Decca SXL6468, *Gramophone*, XLVIII:569 (October 1970), p. 72.

32 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 27 October 1970 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). *Sea Sketches* was completed in 1944, a year before the premiere of *Peter Grimes*.

### **A self-fulfilling circle**

That Williams's birth and half century of life in Wales impacted upon her compositional career is beyond doubt; to rationally hypothesise about what might have been had she either grown up or worked long-term elsewhere is all but impossible. No matter how important, nationality is but one of a myriad of factors that inspires a composer's musical language and choice of subject matter and influences their reception both within their home nation and the world beyond.<sup>33</sup> To even attempt a comparison between the opportunities afforded to/impositions weighing upon Williams and those relating to other composers on the fringes of British and European music is to invite subjectivity in their mere selection. To note, for instance, that the BBC in Wales and Welsh Arts Council each helped disseminate her music whilst restricting her immediate relevance to their UK-wide parent organisations would seem a fair observation: to judge whether a similar situation might have arisen with the BBC Northern Region and Arts Council England would require an over-reliance on supposition and conjuncture.

What is certain, at least, is that Williams's innate ability and Welsh birthright granted her access to certain privileges, from performances at the National Eisteddfod to commissions for major public events such as the Investiture of the Prince of Wales. As a freelance composer, she was able to construct a circle of relevance (but not, perhaps, a sphere of influence) around herself, working with a particularly large number of arts institutions without over-immersing herself in their vested interests and administration. It is difficult, in fact, to think of a Welsh body or event with which she had no contact whatsoever and, where connections were patchy at best, it was often more through self-imposed exile. Perhaps peculiar to Wales, however (and no doubt based on an unusually distinctive regional/national/linguistic identity), is the extent to which these artistically-inclined organisations inter-relate in their service of a small population and geographical area. (To give brief examples: a large proportion of the community participating in Eisteddfodau would also benefit from the concerts given by the BBC Welsh Orchestra; music festivals throughout Wales each rely on the same Arts Council for support; and the constituent colleges of the University of Wales were once at the heart of the vision of the National Council of Music.) Furthermore, each body is generally aware of the activities of the others through formal networks, such as the transfer of staff, and organisations clearly designed to draw their membership from across the sector (e.g. the Guild for the Promotion of Welsh Music). To comprehend Williams's network of contacts, it is essential not to interpret it as a series of

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<sup>33</sup> The present work does not even begin to consider, for example, the fact that Williams's gender has probably also engineered manufactured attempts to group her with other composers.

unconnected points but as a web of individuals each committed to the continuation of a vibrant and distinctive musical culture within Wales.

It would not, perhaps, be inappropriate to further expand the twin metaphors of the circle and the web. Each is a wholly self-contained entity, incapable of allowing those within to interact freely with the world beyond. For Williams, this manifested itself in a general dis-interest in her work from major bodies not explicitly linked with Wales, even if their notional remit remained UK-wide.<sup>34</sup> Her association with the Welsh BBC, Arts Council and festival circuit need not by definition have precluded her wider sponsorship or promotion, yet there seems little doubt that she would have been moved down the priority lists of their UK counterparts upon their observation that she was already receiving some regional financial and artistic assistance. This gradual build-up of solely Welsh support would seem to create a closed system: a self-fulfilling cycle crudely represented by stating that the more support she received from Wales, the less she was perceived to require from elsewhere, so the more she was given from Wales to compensate for the shortfall. The term 'Welsh composer' thus has the potential to represent as close an adherence to sociological patterns than those musical, whilst every mention of Wales or 'Welshness' when discussing Williams's life and work – no matter how appropriate – can serve to erect still stronger borders around the circle in whose context she is considered. Whether the effects of these artificial constructions were ultimately detrimental or beneficial to her career is entirely hypothetical, but their presence cannot be ignored and their removal might accelerate progress towards Malcolm Boyd's qualified conclusion:

It would do Grace Williams's memory no service to exaggerate her importance as a composer, and she herself would have been the first to deplore any tendency to do so. In the geography of Western European music during the 20<sup>th</sup> century her oeuvre occupies a sheltered backwater, and its ripples have scarcely been felt on the high seas of contemporary art. But in the history of music in Wales she occupies a position of the first importance .... Above all, she left many works of the highest quality and originality which Welshmen, *and not only Welshmen* [emphasis added], will do well to cherish and to perform.<sup>35</sup>

A further set of closing remarks by Williams herself – 'I've always considered myself very fortunate to have been born Welsh' – provide the starting point for the present work's concluding passages.<sup>36</sup> Here, she willingly distinguishes between nationalities (rather than

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34 To prove a negative (i.e. with supporting documentation) in this manner is impossible, but one can at least speculate upon why a composer of her generally accepted calibre otherwise received so little from non-Welsh institutions.

35 Boyd, *op. cit.*, p. 84. These remarks close his biography.

36 A.J. Heward Rees and Grace Williams, 'Views and Revisions', *Welsh Music*, V:4 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 7-18.

resenting any imposition by external commentators or decision-makers) without accepting any isolationist tag of musical nationalism.<sup>37</sup> Other examples of this self-differentiation can be found in her descriptions of her works' interpreters, which sometimes imply that she considered her fellow countryfolk to have collectively absorbed undefined cultural influences in a manner subconsciously affecting their artistic temperament. It seems unlikely, for example, that Williams believed it was the language barrier alone which caused Elizabeth Maconchy to 'make nothing of [*Four Mediaeval Welsh Poems*]' whilst their performer 'loves them + sang them with real understanding'.<sup>38</sup> Further evidence that Williams had identified a post-linguistic empathy with her compositional style that was often restricted to Welsh musicians is provided by her statement that the concert premiere of *Fairest of Stars* had been imperilled because the conductor 'was Japanese + ... obviously couldn't respond to my score at all'.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most powerful of her many remarks concerning Wales, however, concerns a work otherwise devoid of any such overtones: the Second Symphony, and the rondo theme of the second movement in particular. Williams described this original tune as 'truly Welsh' – no doubt because it possesses the restricted compass and frequent lombard rhythms characteristic of Welsh folk song – but originally attributed aspects of its accompanying harmony to the influence of Bartók.<sup>40</sup> In belatedly admitting that 'today I feel even that's Welsh', Williams tacitly acknowledged a belief that her heritage was sufficiently present in her own creative thought process as to manifest itself without her even realising.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, it is this lack of conscious awareness concerning any expression of nationhood in Williams's natural, unforced musical language – together with the present writer's focus upon self-definition ahead of more controversial factors – that ultimately justifies the addition of a question mark to Brian Harris's verse in the title of this thesis.

Prose relating to Wales may appear in just about every account of Grace Williams's life and work; wholly unsurprising given the people with whom she worked and the titles, technical

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37 Williams had once defiantly referred to herself as one of a group of 'anti-Nationalists'; see her letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 26 October 1972 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Though speaking here primarily about her political views, Williams was responding to Meic Stephens's request that she re-write her submission to his *Artists in Wales 2* (*op. cit.*) on the implied grounds that it linked Welsh music too firmly to the wider European scene rather than stressing its individuality.

38 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 17 February 1976 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). Maconchy, having composed alongside Williams since the 1920s, perhaps understood the evolution of her musical language and motivation better than anyone

39 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 15 February 1974 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued). The conductor was Akeo Watanabe. See p. 102 of the present work for possibly analogous remarks concerning the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's difficulties in interpreting Williams's spontaneous-sounding, declamatory writing.

40 Grace Williams, note appended to a short-score transcription of an extract (bars 149-168) of Symphony No. 2 sent to Daniel Jones, [undated] March 1959 (NLW, Daniel Jones Archive, CC6/1/2).

41 *Ibid.*

devices and all-infusing singing melodies of her compositions. Arguably, however, that which is explicitly stated obscures that which slumbers underneath: a refusal to deny the inherited power and strength of the ever-present past that Williams seems to have felt on a daily basis and once put briefly into words:

[There is] no hope for young composers who boast that they'll have no truck with the past + won't let themselves be influenced by anyone ... – that really is cocking a snook at the very laws of nature ... we do instinctively want the Arts to follow natural patterns of birth, growth, culmination and completion.<sup>42</sup>

The past may be another country – yet this is perhaps less so in musical Wales than any other.

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42 Grace Williams, letter to Elizabeth Maconchy, 24 August 1967 (private collection: Nicola LeFanu, uncatalogued).

# BIBLIOGRAPHY





# INTRODUCTION

This bibliography concerns itself with identifying the three distinct areas of written material consulted for this thesis and of value to future researchers wishing to consult material relating to Grace Williams. As such, it is divided into sections, as follows:

- A:** Primary source material  
(This includes as complete a record of Grace Williams's surviving correspondence as can be constructed: naturally, further material doubtless remains in additional private collections.)
- B:** Secondary material relating specifically to Grace Williams
- C:** Secondary material relating to wider historical and musicological matters

No discography is supplied; rather, the concluding Appendix to this thesis notes all commercially available recordings ever produced of individual works by Grace Williams.

# A: PRIMARY SOURCES

## **A: National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth**

(includes correspondence from, to and relating to Grace Williams; items of Williams's personalia; official minutes and documentation)

- a C1997/17 'Grace Williams'
- b C1994/106 'William Mathias 2: Personal Papers'
- c NLW MS 22488E
- d A1996/154, A1999/73 'Daniel Jones'
- e A1998/76 'Charles Groves'
- f B1989/46 'Meic Stephens'
- g NLW MS 23699
- h B1984/14, B1984/20, C1985/17, A1985/52 'Selwyn Jones'
- i C1987/7 'Welsh National Opera Company'
- j C1984/158, C1987/35 'Welsh Arts Council 2'

## **B: BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham**

(includes correspondence from, to and relating to Grace Williams; official documentation regarding music in Wales)

- a WA1/61/1 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1934-1937\File 1a)
- b WA1/61/2 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1938-1941\File 1b)
- c WA1/61/3 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1942-1948\File 1c)
- d WA1/61/4 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1949-1953\File 1d)
- e WA1/61/5 (Welsh Region\Composers\Williams, Grace\1954-1956\File 1e)
- f M25/1124 (Birmingham Composers\Williams, Grace\File 1\1950-1951)
- g WA10/250/1 (Artists\Grace Williams\1956-69)
- h (Central RCONT1\Grace Williams\Music Composer\File 1a\1939-1949)
- i (RCONT1\Grace Williams\Composer\File 1B\1950-1962)
- j (RCONT12\Central Registry (Langham)\Grace Williams\Composer\II 1963-67)
- k (RCONT1\Williams, Grace\Copyright\1933-1952)
- l (RCONT1\Copyright\Williams, Grace\1953-1962\File 2)
- m (RCONT18\Copyright\Grace Williams\File 2\1963-1969)
- n (RCONT20\Solicitors and Copyright Registry\Grace Williams\1970-)
- o (RCONT1\Music Copyist\Williams, Grace\1946-1955\File 1)
- p (RCONT12\Grace Williams\Music Copyist\File II 1963-67)
- q (RCONT1\Talks\Williams, Grace\1946-1962\File 1)
- r (RCONT12\Grace Williams\Contributors\Speaker\File II 1963-1967)
- s WA8/262/1 (Welsh Region Talks Pre 1970\Williams, Grace\1948-1968)
- t WA20/223/1 (Welsh Radio Copyright\Williams, Grace\File 1\1942-1950)
- u WA20/223/2 (Welsh Radio Copyright\Williams, Grace\File 2\1951-1954)
- v WA20/223/3 (Miss Grace Williams\File 3 1955-64\Copyright)
- w R27/515 (Music General\Welsh Music\1940-1949\File 1)
- x R27/637/1 (Music Reports\Grace Williams)

## **C: Bangor University Archive**

(correspondence from Grace Williams)

- a Enid Parry Papers (uncatalogued)
- b 23104-23105A 'Papurau Huw Williams, Prestatyn'

**D: Private Collection, Nicola LeFanu**

(correspondence between Grace Williams and Elizabeth Maconchy)

a (uncatalogued)

**E: Private Collection, Eryl Freestone**

(includes correspondence to Grace Williams from Benjamin Britten, Daniel Jones, Ina Boyle, Dorothy Gow, Ralph Vaughan Williams and many others; items of Williams's personalia)

a (uncatalogued)

**F: Royal Northern College of Music**

(correspondence from Grace Williams to Thomas Pitfield)

a Thomas Pitfield Collection

**G: Private Collection, Gareth Walters**

(correspondence from Grace Williams to Irwyn Walters)

a (uncatalogued)

**H: Welsh Music Information Centre, Cardiff**

(includes correspondence to Grace Williams and W.M. Williams from various contacts; items of Williams's personalia)

a (uncatalogued)

**I: Britten-Pears Foundation, Aldeburgh**

(correspondence from Grace Williams to Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears)

a 9103412 'Grace Williams Collection'

**J: National Archives, Kew**

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a BD 67/20 (Documents 1968-1969\W41(14)\Investiture of the Prince of Wales\Music Sub-Committee)

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