

SALLY HARPER, *MUSIC IN WELSH CULTURE BEFORE 1650: A STUDY OF THE PRINCIPAL SOURCES* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), ISBN 978-0-7546-5263-2, xx + 462pp, \$99.95/£60.

This substantial publication is the first modern, and only major, study to provide a comprehensive overview of Welsh music history from the earliest written evidence up to the mid-seventeenth century. With the very first words of her introduction, the author, Sally Harper, declares her intentions: to demonstrate the misguidedness of the long-held assumption that a lack of sources, and the fragmentary nature of those that do survive, would render such a study impossible. Another disincentive has been the handicap of many musicologists, particularly outside of Wales, of not being competent in the Welsh language, a necessary requirement for accessing many of the primary sources. In this regard, as also in her qualifications as a scholar both of Latin liturgical chant and of Welsh oral-tradition music, Dr Harper is uniquely placed to undertake such a project.

Using a wide and diverse range of source materials, and with reference to social and cultural contexts throughout, the subject of this monograph is divided into three parts. Part I is concerned with the sources and practice of medieval *cerdd dant*; Part II covers the Latin liturgy, its chant and embellishment; and Part III, Welsh music in an English milieu, c1550–1650. Each section begins with an introductory overview which encapsulates the detailed discussion which follows. The overviews are accompanied by maps, respectively, of the bardic provinces of Wales, the ecclesiastical dioceses, and the main centres of English influence and acculturation as reflected in musical activity.

Part I has seven sections, addressing the following topics: *cerdd dant* in context; oral and written sources for mastering the bardic craft; harp and *crwth*, the primary stringed instruments of medieval Wales; the players of *cerdd dant* and their social code; documentary sources; historical and theoretical sources; and the renowned Robert ap Huw manuscript and other Welsh harp tablature.

The practitioners of *cerdd dant*, or the 'craft of the string', and *cerdd dafod*, the 'craft of the tongue', were the Welsh equivalent of the Irish harpers and poets who served the old nobility and were regarded as skilled professionals of the highest order. Little is known about their earlier history. Up to the time of the invasion of Edward I at the end of the thirteenth century, the Welsh princes were the chief patrons of these courtly arts, and each would have had his own resident royal bard. However, following the defeat of Llywelyn ap Gryffydd, the last of the princes, in 1282, patronage passed to the wealthy landowners. Consequently poets and musicians were obliged to become itinerant, travelling from one household to another (including ecclesiastical institutions) rather than taking up official residence. More is known of the poets than the musicians, since some of their poetry has survived. Among the more famous are Dafydd ap Gwilym (fl. 1330–50) and Iolo Goch (c1325–c1398). However, it seems that

they were often accompanied by a musician as they travelled about in search of engagements.

The practice of the travelling performer, or 'bardic circuiting' (Welsh *clera*), survived up to the end of the bardic order in the seventeenth century. The book contains extensive documentation of named patrons, locations, poetry and specific occasions of entertainment. In some instances, these are complemented by precise architectural details since several timber-framed hall-houses from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century still survive. The patron and his entourage were seated on a dais at one end of the hall.

Poetry was declaimed and accompanied on a stringed instrument, either harp or *crwth*. The older generation of harpers used horsehair strings; later types were of gut (sometimes referred to as leather), and fitted with brays (wooden L-shaped pegs attached to the soundboard which caused the strings to buzz). The form of lyre known as *crwth* in Wales could be plucked or bowed, like the Irish *timpán*. And like it also, it remained an instrument of lower status than the harp. Both *crwth* and *timpán* existed in two forms, one with six strings, the other with three. Use of the latter appears to have been confined to lesser instrumentalists. It was known in Welsh as *trithant* ('three-stringed'), which is reminiscent of the Irish term '*ocht-tédach*' ('eight-stringed') as applied to the small harps used by itinerant clerics and perhaps others as well (the sources do not inform us). The six-stringed Welsh *crwth* was characterized by four melody strings stretched over a fingerboard, thus capable of being stopped by the player, while two were set obliquely away from the fingerboard and served as drones. The *crwth* player's prestige seems to have increased in the sixteenth century but by the eighteenth the instrument had been largely superseded by the fiddle. Nevertheless it continued in use until the early twentieth century, and is currently enjoying a revival (Harper lists some sources in a Discography). Other instruments used more generally included pipes, horns, and drums. Among them, a reference to a horn of copper in a fifteenth-century poem (11) is noteworthy, dependent as we are on the occasional literary reference and on archaeological finds. Whatever we may suppose, Irish literary references contain no description of the material substance of medieval horns, and the only archaeological and iconographic evidence we have is for wooden instruments.

What is often regarded as the earliest recorded *eisteddfod* was the great feast held at Cardigan Castle in 1176 by (Lord) Rhys ap Gruffudd (1132–97), although this occasion does not appear to have involved the rigorous grading and professional monitoring that characterized later events. The later *eisteddfodau* were established in order to introduce performance standards, and also to keep out many of the casual minstrels and entertainers who were presenting competition to, and thus perceived as

undermining of, trained practitioners of the bardic crafts. Important occasions were those held at Carmarthen (south-west Wales), c1452, and Caerwys, Flintshire (north-east Wales) in 1523 and 1567. The 1523 *eisteddfod* was especially important since it was the occasion for which the document known as the Statute of Gruffudd ap Cynan was compiled. This sixteenth-century Statute sets out the requirements for the regulation of the crafts of music and poetry, including the grading and progression of apprentices. It refers mainly to contemporary practice but purports to reproduce an earlier document said to have been drawn up by Gruffudd ap Cynan (c1055–1137) himself, allegedly with the same aim: that of protecting the profession by ‘weeding out’ unlicensed entertainers through a system of apprenticeship and examination. In addition, prizes were instituted for the best poet and the best musician at the *eisteddfod*.

There is an Irish association with the Statute which has long been a source of interest and some puzzlement. The Latin Annals compiled by Friar Thady Dowling, Chancellor of Leighlin (d. 1628), contain a reference to Gruffudd ap Cynan’s having brought Irish instrumentalists with him from Ireland to Wales, including players of harp, *timpán*, lyre and *crwth*. Harper suggests that Dowling’s source may have been David Powel’s *History of Cambria, now called Wales* (1584). Powel’s history is based on an English translation by Humphrey Lhuyd (1527–68) of a lost copy of a medieval chronicle, *Brut y Tywysogion* (the ‘Deeds of the Princes’ or ‘*Taoisigh*’) to which Lhuyd added material from other earlier sources. Powel also introduced embellishments of his own, among which he attributed to contemporary Welsh instrumentalists a direct descent from Gruffudd ap Cynan, also stating that their music had been brought from Ireland through his agency. Powel’s emphasis was undoubtedly due to his desire to accord an ancient pedigree to the traditional *cerdd dant*. Gruffudd ap Cynan’s mother and grandmother were indeed Irish and he himself was born in Ireland. However, Harper emphasizes that, while any direct association between Gruffudd ap Cynan and the Statute has long been dismissed as spurious, the possibility of his influence (or at least that of his Irish contemporaries) on Welsh music in the twelfth century should not be overlooked (30, 46). Another indication of this is seen in the writings of the Cambro-Norman cleric Gerald of Wales (c1146–1233) who, in his *Topographia Hibernica*, asserted that Welsh music of his time mimicked that of Ireland.

The long-term history of association between Welsh and Irish musicians is lost in the mists of time. Yet these seemingly incidental references are supported by a document on the conservation of *cerdd dant*, the *Lloegr Drigiant* of Gruffudd Hiraethog, dating to c1561. In this document a description is given of a convention of Irish and Welsh musicians held at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow (Welsh ‘Glyn Achlach’) said to have been presided over by Muirchertach Ua Briain (d. 1119), King of Munster and High King of Ireland, who was a close ally of Gruffudd ap Cynan. In Harper’s view such a late attribution to an Irishman of the sanctioning of Welsh musical measures—

at a time when Welsh attitudes towards Ireland were notably hostile—suggests even more strongly the likelihood of some truth in the traditional theory that Welsh music was shaped by Irish influence (112–3).

Gerald of Wales is an important source of information on Welsh musical practices. In his *Descriptio Kambriae* he refers to entertainment by young female harpers at the Welsh courts, and observes that Welsh performers not only recited from memory the genealogies of princes but also that they kept copies of these in their ancient books. This is a significant piece of evidence for vernacular writing in Welsh for which documents no longer exist. In his *Itinerarium Kambriae*, Gerald also makes a passing reference to a Welsh singer and harper performing *alternatim*, and to Welsh players of long horns (*cornhiriez*). (Such instruments were also known in medieval Ireland.) And, as Harper suggests, these last may have been forerunners of the trumpeters engaged at the English court in the fourteenth century (37 and 70ff.). Gerald's observations also include an account of musical activity on what would in Ireland be called a 'pattern day' (i.e. rural celebration of the feasts of local or 'patron' saints). The feast of St Eluned, which fell on 1 August (also Lammas Day), was, he states, an occasion of popular trance-like dancing and the singing of refrains in the church of St Eluned and the nearby churchyard, which lay close to Brecon. (The church was built on the site where Eluned was believed to have been martyred.) In the *Descriptio*, Gerald also notes the practice of multi-part singing among the Welsh, 'where there are as many songs and varieties of voice as there are heads, and they finally come together in a single consonance governed by B flat with all its charm and sweetness' (195–6). The exact meaning of this account remains elusive and may refer to something comparable to English *rondellus* technique, or to the kind of heterophony as is practised in hymn singing on the Isle of Lewis in the Hebrides. However, it does suggest improvisation in more than one part, and was clearly unusual to Gerald's ears. The reference to a concluding B flat occurs also in Gerald's account of Irish harpers and it may be intended more as a general reference to a satisfactory closing consonance than to a particular mode or pitch, as the author suggests.

The remainder of Part I is devoted to detailed accounts of the players and documentary evidence for *cerdd dant*, Welsh music theory, and practical matters such as the interpretation of Welsh tablatures. Primary among these is the Robert ap Huw manuscript, a seminal source for the medieval Welsh harp repertory. Its contents were copied by Robert ap Huw in the seventeenth century from older sources dating back to at least the fifteenth century and possibly much earlier. Significant advances have been made since the 1990s in the interpretation of the tablature and its technical implications, thoroughly but succinctly described in Chapter 7 of the book.

In the course of the eight sections of Part II, discussion ranges from the relatively independent local courts and monasteries of the pre-Conquest period to the increasing centralization of the Welsh church by the Anglo-Norman ascendancy and the almost complete replacement (or takeover) of local monastic communities by the incoming English and continental religious orders. Topics include an overview of sources for the medieval Welsh liturgy; early Welsh *clas* institutions (i.e. clusters of monastic communities dependent on one mother house); Anglo-Norman liturgical reform; the adoption of Sarum Use in Wales; followed by sections devoted to the only two sources with substantial music notation to survive from medieval Wales, the Penpont Antiphoner and the Bangor Pontifical; and concluding with discussions of the late medieval evidence for institutions and musical practice.

Like the early Irish church, that of Wales appears to have incorporated some vernacular material into the liturgy, as indicated in the 'Book of Taliesin', a fourteenth-century manuscript containing, *inter alia*, religious poetry which may date to before 600. However, information on liturgical practices in the pre-Conquest church in Wales indicates also that they were in some respects quite distinctive, even from Ireland.

The daily chant rituals were performed from memory, hence notation is unlikely to have been recorded in pre-Conquest Wales. However, two classical sequences in Latin survive in Welsh sources, apparently composed by Welsh authors; and rhymed, partly metrical prayers attributed to Moucan, an eighth-century Welsh cleric, also survive. There is a suggestion too that the *laus perennis*, also practised in the early Irish church, was kept up in early Welsh monasteries. A reference in the *Trioedd Ynys Prydain* (the 'Triads of the Island of Britain') describes the monastery at Bangor Is-Coed as containing 2,400 religious men of whom one hundred in turn would maintain a round of perpetual 'harmony' ('*cyfangan*') by day and by night. There is also evidence for the existence of Culdees (*Céli Dé*) in other parts of North Wales. These were communities of monks who followed a strict eremitical rule. No surviving sources are associated directly with these Welsh groups, but from Irish sources it is known that the *Céli Dé* placed especial emphasis on the liturgical singing of the psalms.

Following the conquest of Edward I, and the extensive pillage and burning which accompanied it (including the demise of the last of the Welsh princes referred to above), a programme of rebuilding and repair ensued which was to align the Welsh church with the rest of the Canterbury province. Hence it is no surprise that liturgical practices in the Welsh church as a whole began to conform closely to their English and continental counterparts by the thirteenth century. Local rites continued for a while, particularly in North Wales, though not without sanction. For example, the bishops of both St Davids and Llandaff were suspended by Canterbury on grounds of continuing to observe indigenous practices.

As late as 1188, Gerald of Wales reported the existence of an aged abbot whose sons assisted him at the altar; and various injunctions are recorded which demonstrate what must have once been extensive local resistance in some places at least. Some of these, associated with Archbishop John Pecham (1284), refer to St Asaph, St Davids and Llandaff. North Wales, which lay somewhat beyond the boundaries of Anglo-Norman reform after 1098, appears to have come in for particular criticism concerning illiteracy, poverty and drunkenness; and the wearing of inappropriate dress, such as striped cloaks and bright tunics worn with long hair and bare legs; concubinage was also itemized for disapproval in this final fatal blow to the older indigenous culture.

Sarum Use (succinctly stated by Harper (163) as a variant of the Roman Rite widely adopted in England) was gradually imposed throughout Wales in the course of the thirteenth century. St Davids Cathedral had adopted elements of it in 1224, being among the first centres to do so outside of England. It had reached St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin by c1220, and Moray, Scotland by 1242. Printed books of Sarum Use were in circulation from the later 1480s. Earlier post-Conquest Welsh sources also show influence of the Uses of York and Hereford. And there has been some suggestion that an identifiable Use of Bangor once existed. However, Harper believes that this may be more a general reference to non-conformity than to an actual distinctive Use (201).

Of the many monastic orders introduced to post-Conquest Wales, the Cistercians became the most successful, with some outstanding *scriptoria* and well-stocked libraries. A surviving early fourteenth-century catalogue from Margam Abbey lists 242 books on theological topics; and some fifteen different scribes are known to have worked there between 1150 and 1225. However, while important collections of secular texts still exist which are known to have been copied there, only two quasi-liturgical books have been traced: a Bible from Tintern Abbey and a Martyrology from Margam (192).

There is some evidence for an interest among the Anglo-Normans in the cults of local Welsh saints and in native traditions—a feature of some late medieval Irish liturgical books also. The Benedictines seem to have had a particularly independent approach, including more Welsh saints in their liturgies than did other communities. This process involved the creation of new Proper Offices (for celebrating the Liturgical Hours) and Masses through the adaptation of saints' *Lives*. And unique texts, including rhymed Offices, survive for Ss David and Winefride, as well as materials for Ss Cadog, Dyfrig and Teilo. They include a copy by James Ussher (Archbishop of Armagh, 1581–1656) of a sixteenth-century copy of an older document containing Welsh liturgical materials—among them a unique '*Salve festa dies*' processional hymn for St David, summaries of lections for St Teilo as well as metrical Lives for Ss Caradog and Justinian from lost material written by Thomas Sant, Archdeacon of St Davids

(1500–13). Gerald of Wales also distinguished himself in liturgical arrangements. He wrote an antiphon for St David and adapted a version of St David's *Life* for liturgical readings at Matins to be celebrated on the feast of St David and that of his mother, St Nonnita. This *Life* was based on the earlier one by Rhygyfarch. (Rhygyfarch was one of the four sons of Bishop Sulien (1011–91) whose *clas* at Llanbadarn Fawr survived well into the twelfth century (175; Llanbadarn Fawr, near Aberystwyth, was a centre of veneration to St Padarn). Other Welsh saints are listed in calendars, and one can reasonably assume (as in the case of Hiberno-Norman Ireland) that the practice would have been more widespread and representative than surviving evidence suggests. (One error on p. 208 states that rhymed offices for Ss Brigit and Canice survive in only one source. There are in fact others.)

Of the two most substantial notated sources from Wales, the Penpont Antiphoner (c1320–90) was produced in England for Welsh use (possibly Brecon). It includes materials for David and Winifrede, as well as listing another Welsh saint, 'Sustinian' (Welsh for 'Justinian'), in a litany. The Bangor Pontifical (c1315–20) was used by the bishops of Bangor from the outset. It was copied and illuminated in East Anglia, the region which also produced the slightly later, lavishly decorated, Psalter which was commissioned for Christ Church Cathedral Dublin (now MS Rawlinson G. 185, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, dated to the late fourteenth century). Like Bangor, the Christ Church Psalter contains no liturgical material of local significance, and all three manuscripts largely follow the Use of Sarum. The remainder of the discussion of Latin liturgy and its contexts in Part II is given over to accounts of musical activity, its organisation and practice, in late medieval ecclesiastical institutions—cathedrals, monasteries, and collegiate and parish churches.

Part III takes our gaze more firmly in an easterly direction, with an examination of the music of Wales as a reflection of a dominant English culture and its adaptation to a Welsh environment. 'Mirroring England' encompasses discussion of the contexts and repertoires of domestic and popular music-making, and music in the parishes of the post-Reformation Church, Cathedral and household chapel. As with the rest of Harper's survey, documentation is extensive and thorough.

This monograph is erudite yet highly accessible, thorough and well laid out. One particularly attractive feature is the number of subheadings. In that respect it functions also as a handbook or quasi-encyclopedia, enabling the reader to look up a particular topic without needing to engage in extensive and discursive reading. That is enhanced also by a list of liturgical sources in an appendix. Among these are two fifteenth-century Irish breviaries containing liturgies for St David along with those for Irish saints. (One of these breviaries is now in Aberystwyth, the other in the National Library of Ireland, Dublin). The large number of illustrations in Harper's book both

enlivens and informs. Also included are a substantial Bibliography and select Discography, along with an extremely detailed and useful General Index. However, a glossary of Welsh-language musical instrument terminology, technical musical terms, etc., and perhaps a list of named patrons and performers, would have been helpful in providing a summary of the current *status quo* of research on these topics. Furthermore, given its comprehensive scope, and the broad constituency of readers which such a book is likely to reach, a glossary of Latin liturgical terms would complete its usefulness as a work of reference. In view of the diverse, and at times patchy, nature of the sources and their broad historical sweep, Harper's survey is an ambitious one, and not one that many scholars could have attempted, let alone succeeded in carrying out with such conviction. This book will long remain a milestone not only for students of the history of music in medieval Wales, but as a model-setting example of Insular musicological research. We are very much in her debt.

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