

JONES, SHÂN EMLYN (1936 - 1997), singer

Name: Shân Emlyn Jones
Date of birth: 1936
Date of death: 1997
Spouse: Owen Edwards
Child: Mari Emlyn
Child: Elin Edwards
Parent: Joanna Jones (née Owen)
Parent: Emlyn Jones
Gender: Female
Occupation: singer
Area of activity: Music; Performing Arts
Author: Rhidian Griffiths

Shân Emlyn was born in Oxford on 8 February 1936, the daughter of Emlyn Jones and his wife Joanna (née Owen). The family lived in Oxford, where the father was a clerk in Morris Motors and a member of the works band, until the beginning of the Second World War, when they returned to Wales, settling first in Felinheli and then in Pwllheli.

With a trombonist father and a mother who was a music teacher, Shân not surprisingly enjoyed singing and performing from an early age; she was encouraged by her parents and by a neighbour, the gifted accompanist Maimie Noel Jones. She won prizes locally and at the National Eisteddfodau in Colwyn Bay (1947) and Bridgend (1948) for folk-singing. Also in 1948 she gained a first prize at the International Eisteddfod in Llangollen. She was heard by music lecturer **Ceridwen Lloyd Davies** of Bangor, who offered to teach her, and as a pupil at Pwllheli Grammar School she was strongly influenced by the music master John Newman. While still in her teens she appeared on radio and television, travelling to London at the age of fifteen to sing on a TV programme. She featured on the front page of the Welsh newspaper *Y Cymro* on 26 February 1954, dressed in her Welsh costume in honour of St David's Day.

Having won a place at the Royal Academy of Music in London, she studied harp with Gwendolen Mason, gaining an LRAM and the Julie Leney prize for the harp. During her time in London she was secretary to the London University Students' Welsh Society and performed for Princess Alexandra. In 1955 she took part in a pageant of the life of the Welsh hymnwriter **Ann Griffiths** as part of the London Welsh St David's Day Concert at the Albert Hall. She made two recordings of Welsh folk-songs for the Qualiton label in 1959, and her voice can also be heard on the Sain record, *Caneuon y Siroedd* ('Songs of the Counties', 1983).

Following her marriage in 1958 she abandoned her ambition to become a professional singer, but became well known as a performer in Wales, particularly as an interpreter of folk-song. She was very active in Welsh-speaking circles in Cardiff, and was one of the founders and strong supporters of the Welsh-language community newspaper, *Y Dinesydd*, begun in 1973. She was Vice-Chair of the Welsh Folk-Song Society from 1986 to 1988 and Chair from 1989 to 1991 and was a regular attendee and contributor to the Society's conferences. She also frequently acted as an adjudicator at local eisteddfodau and the National Eisteddfod.

From 1979 she was secretary of Cymdeithas Cymru-Ariannin, the Wales-Argentine Society which promotes links with descendants of the nineteenth-century Welsh settlers of 'Y Wladfa' in Patagonia. This entailed strengthening relations between 'Y Wladfa' and Wales and encouraging visits between the two countries. Shân herself visited Patagonia on several occasions and recorded conversations with Welsh-speaking families and examples of folk-songs: these recordings are preserved at the National Library of Wales. From 1992 until her death she was employed at the Welsh Music Information Centre in Cardiff, also working as a researcher for television.

Shân Emlyn married Owen Edwards (1933-2010), broadcaster and elder son of **Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards**, at Penmount chapel, Pwllheli, on 16 April 1958. They had two daughters, Elin and Mari. The marriage was dissolved in 1994.

She suffered poor health in her last years and died in Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor on 30 December 1997. Her funeral took place at Penmount chapel on 6 January 1998, and she was buried in Penrhos cemetery. Donations were received in her memory towards the work of Cymdeithas Cymru-Ariannin.

Author

Rhidian Griffiths

Sources

'Shân Emlyn', *Blodau'r Ffair* 7 (1958), pp.32-4

Meredydd Evans, 'Shân Emlyn: teyrnged', *Folk Song Journal of the Welsh Folk-Song Society* 21 (1998), pp.45-49

Meredydd Evans, 'Shân Emlyn: teyrnged', *Welsh Music* 10/1, Autumn 1998, pp.6-7

Shân Emlyn, 'Caneuon gwerin Cymraeg yn y Wladfa', *Folk Song Journal of the Welsh Folk-Song Society* 5 (1982), pp.33-46

Images

Geoff Charles, The wedding of Shan Emlyn to Owen Edwards at Penmount Chapel, Pwllheli

Geoff Charles, Owen Edwards and Shan Emlyn

Geoff Charles, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol yr Urdd, Caerfyrddin 1967

Geoff Charles, Urdd Eisteddfod proclamation ceremony at Rhyl in 1974, opened by Shan Emlyn

Additional Links

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Published date: 2020-05-20

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APA Citation



Griffiths, R., (2020). JONES, SHÂN EMLYN (1936 - 1997), singer. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*. Retrieved 11 Nov 2024, from <https://biography.wales/article/s12-JONE-EML-1936>

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