



Photos: (l-r) Alis Huws © Catrin Arwel; Dylan Thomas © Getty Images; Gareth Brynmor John

Immersive Performance Commemorates Dylan Thomas 70th Anniversary

Saturday 4th November 2023

In honour of the 70th anniversary of the passing of renowned poet Dylan Thomas, The Dylan Thomas Birthplace and composer Michael Stimpson are delighted to announce an extraordinary event that will take place in the poet's cherished home in Swansea.

"Dylan," an immersive performance of Stimpson's captivating song cycle, will transport audiences through the life and works of the iconic Welsh wordsmith. The event blends spoken excerpts and musical settings, featuring the acclaimed baritone Gareth Brynmor John and Royal harpist Alis Huws.

The performance will be held in Dylan Thomas' historic Swansea birthplace, allowing attendees to explore the poet's home both before and after experiencing the evocative music.

To ensure this memorable event reaches a wider audience, the performance will be live-streamed by World of Sound.

Due to the overwhelming response and enthusiasm, additional performances of "Dylan" are planned in New York, where the poet's life came to an end. The first performance will take place at Rutgers Presbyterian Church on 11 November, home of The Welsh Congregation of New York. An additional performance will be held at St John's in the Village the following day, 12 November.

"Dylan" promises to be an unforgettable experience, fusing the power of words and music to celebrate the enduring legacy of one of the greatest literary figures of the 20th century.



Dylan Thomas' bedroom © The Dylan Thomas Birthplace

Book now at <https://www.michaelstimpson.co.uk/dylan-project>



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Notes to Editors

About The Dylan Thomas Birthplace

The visit of HRH King Charles III to The Dylan Thomas Birthplace on 14th December 2012 marked the end of a nine-year journey, to see Dylan Thomas' home restored to its former glory.

The journey began when Geoff Haden, a Swansea local, visited 5 Cwmdonkin Drive on the 50th anniversary of Dylan Thomas's passing. Thomas was born in the front bedroom of the house in 1914, and had lived there throughout his formative years. Upon seeing the crumbling ex-student bedsit, Haden took on the daunting prospect of restoring it when the lease became available two years later.

A three-year restoration project followed, and 5 Cwmdonkin Drive was opened to the public by Dylan Thomas' daughter, Aeronwy, on the 94th anniversary of the poet's birth in 2008.

The house is as it might have been in 1914 when bought by the Thomas family. The project could not have happened without a huge team effort from building craftsmen and building suppliers, plus a vast number of people involved in furnishing the house. It was a nine-year, self-funded, labour of love to restore Dylan Thomas' birthplace and family home.

It is a unique tribute to one of the greatest literary figures of the 20th century.

<https://www.dylanthomasbirthplace.com/>

About Composer Michael Stimpson

The works of Michael Stimpson have been performed, commissioned, and recorded by some of the UK's most distinguished artists including the English Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Allegri and Maggini String Quartets, Bristol Bach Choir, Roderick Williams, Paul Agnew, David Campbell, Philippe Graffin, and Sioned Williams. A number of the UK's finest venues have featured performances of his work including the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, and Cadogan Hall, as well as a variety of UK festivals. International recognition has prompted performances in Australia, Europe, Iran and the USA.

His works are varied in their subject matter, the stimulus often from contemporary events, favourite authors, and poets. String Quartet No. 1 (Robben Island) reflected the breakdown of apartheid; The Stars Have Withdrawn Their Shining (harp), the life of John Ruskin; The Angry Garden (choir and orchestra) explored the issue of global warming; A Walk Into War (tenor and piano quintet) was based on the writing of Laurie Lee. Tales from the 15th Floor (cello and piano) was a personal account of over four months in intensive care; and Dylan (baritone and harp) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the death of Wales's most renowned poet, Dylan Thomas.



Composer Michael Stimpson © Andrew McCombie



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Michael's major work to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2, *Clouds of War* (choir and orchestra) was presented at Cadogan Hall in the presence of HRH Prince Michael of Kent, and guest speaker Kate Adie. 2009 focused on a four-stage evolutionary work, *Age of Wonders*, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin. It began as a work for violin and piano at the Wigmore Hall with Philippe Graffin and Elizabeth Burley, guest reader Robert Tear. The Maggini Quartet premiered *The Beagle* (String Quartet, No.2), at the Peninsula Arts Contemporary Music Festival before the piece evolved further to string orchestra, Wigmore Hall, London Sinfonietta. The fourth and final stage, *Transmutations*, was commissioned and premiered in Darwin, Australia, which saw the work - duo, quartet, string orchestra and full orchestra - performed in its entirety at a large-scale open air concert.

Michael went on to write the four-act opera for soli, chorus and full orchestra, *Jesse Owens*, based on the life of the iconic US athlete who won four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics of 1936. With the aim of increasing opportunity and attracting new audiences to opera, he collaborated with poets John Agard and Grace Nichols on the libretto and designed the opera to have all the lead roles for black singers, together with a mixed race chorus of all levels and abilities. After finishing the opera, Michael completed *Preludes In Our Time* for piano (premiered at St. Johns Smith Square), two works from the poetry of Giovanni Pascoli, and a new work for solo harp, *The Drowning of Capel Celyn* (Sioned Williams, Purcell Room).

More recent new works include *String Quartet No.3* (Leonardo) for spoken voice and string quartet, *Variations on Papaver Rhoeas* (piano), *The Balancing of Opposites* (flute and piano), and *Silvered Night* for piano and orchestra. Both *Variations* and *The Balancing of Opposites* are available on the CD, *When The Light Shines* (Philippa Davies, flute, and Megumi Fujita, piano). Another new work, *Silvered Night* was released on CD in April 2021 with Mark Bebbington (piano). This was recorded in September 2019 at Henry Wood Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, who were later joined by the City of London Choir to record *The Angry Garden*. Two piano trios were recorded with the Aquinas Piano Trio in October 2020.

There are seven CDs of Michael's music: *Journeyman* (Allegri Quartet); *Dylan & The Drowning of Capel Celyn* (Roderick Williams, baritone and Sioned Williams, harp, Stone Records); *Incidental Music from the opera Jesse Owens & Preludes in Our Time* (Abigail Kelly, Johnny Herford, Megumi Fujita and the Philharmonia Orchestra, conductor Stuart Stratford, Stone Records); *Age of Wonders* (Philharmonia Orchestra, Stuart Stratford, Stone Records); and *The Angry Garden* (Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, City of London Choir, conductor Hillary Davan Wetton); *Reflections* (Aquinas Piano Trio); *When The Light Shines* (Karen Stephenson, Sophia Rahman, Philippa Davies, Megumi Fujita).

Publishers of Michael's music and texts include Oxford University Press, Ricordi, and Creighton's Collection, amongst others.

<https://www.michaelstimpson.co.uk/>



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About Baritone Gareth Brynmor John

Gareth Brynmor John is the 2013 winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Award. He studied at St John's College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music where, in his final year, he won the Royal Academy of Music Patrons' Award. He then studied at the National Opera Studio where he was supported by the Royal Opera House.

He made his Welsh National Opera début in Spring 2017 singing Schaunard (*La Bohème*), and has gone on to sing the title role in Eugene Onegin, Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Robert (*Les Vepres Siciliennes*), Papageno, and Sharpless, all for WNO. With the Royal Academy Opera, his roles included Eugene Onegin, Claudio (*Béatrice et Bénédict*) under Sir Colin Davis, The Ferryman (*Curlew River*), Sprecher (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Sir Thomas Bertram (*Mansfield Park*, Jonathan Dove). He recently performed Ismeron (*The Indian Queen*) for Opéra de Lille under Emmanuelle Haïm. The production returns this Spring with performances at Opéra de Caen, Opéra de Luxembourg and Antwerp Opera.

Gareth has performed extensively on the concert platform with a number of the UK's leading orchestras and ensembles. Highlights and future plans include Elijah with the Really Big Chorus at Birmingham Town Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Cadogan Hall; Carmina Burana with the Bach Choir at the Royal Festival Hall, and at the Barbican and the Royal Albert Hall; Handel Messiah at the Royal Albert Hall; Fauré Requiem at the Royal Albert Hall, Dream of Gerontius with the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus; Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony at Salisbury Cathedral, and with the English Arts Chorale at Dorking Halls; Israel in Egypt at the Saffron Walden Concert Hall; Rachmaninov The Bells; Britten's War Requiem at Guildford and Chichester Cathedrals and with the Cambridge University Music Society; Brahms Requiem with the Ulster Orchestra and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra broadcast on BBC Radio 3; Belshazzar's Feast at Guildford Cathedral; Stanford Mass Via Victrix with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and released on Lyrita label; The Kingdom and Claudio / Béatrice et Bénédict with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra broadcast on BBC Radio 3; Dido and Aeneas with Hong Kong Philharmonic; The World Premiere of Vision of a Garden (Richard Blackford) with The Bach Choir and David Hill at the Festival Hall; St Matthew Passion at the Festival Hall with the Bach Choir; the premiere of John Rutter's Tidings of Joy at the Royal Albert Hall; and Vaughan William's Fantasia on Christmas Carols at the Concertgebouw with The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, and on BBC 2 Carols from King's.

Sought after for his performances of lieder, he has given recitals at St John's Smith Square, Wigmore Hall, Barber Institute, King's Place, and at many of the UK music festivals, including Oxford Lieder, The English Music Festival, Ludlow Festival of Song, Music in the Round, North Norfolk Music Festival, Buxton Festival, Ryedale Festival and Leeds Lieder. He recently shared two recitals with Roderick Williams as part of the Momentum Artists project, and sang Vaughan Williams Five Mystical Songs with the Aalborg Symphoniker broadcast on Danish Radio P2. His recording of Mahler Lieder eines fahrenden gesellen with Trevor Pinnock is available on Linn Records. His recent recording of Stanford's Children's songs for the Somm label has received wide critical acclaim as well as his solo recording for the Champs Hill label. His recording of Shostakovich's 'Four Pushkin Romances Op 46' is scheduled for release later this Spring with Rubicon.

Gareth is represented worldwide by Groves Artists.

<https://www.grovesartists.com/artist/gareth-brynmor-john/>



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About Harpist Alis Huws

Official Royal Harpist, Alis Huws is a freelance soloist, orchestral and chamber musician. Alongside her royal role, she regularly gives recitals across the UK and internationally, having toured to Japan, Europe, the US and Hong Kong.

As a soloist, Alis has performed at many high-profile engagements including the Welsh National Service of Prayer and Reflection for HM Queen Elizabeth II, The Royal Opening of the Senedd 2016 and 2021, The Welsh National Thanksgiving Service for VJ Day and the opening of the Welsh Government's offices in Berlin. She has performed at a number of prestigious venues including Sony Hall (NYC), 10 Downing Street, Windsor Castle, St James' Palace and St David's Hall. In 2019 she appeared as a soloist with Britten Sinfonia, which was later broadcast on Classic FM. Additionally her work has been broadcast on BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio Wales, BBC Radio Cymru and all major UK television channels.

Alis is passionate about outreach and bringing music into communities, giving regular interactive concerts for people living with dementia as well as working with children with additional needs. She recently embarked on a tour of 30 primary schools across rural Powys to celebrate 30 years of Live Music Now's work in Wales.

Alis is a keen orchestral musician and enjoys working with orchestras across the UK including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Welsh National Opera and the London Chamber Orchestra. In 2020-22 she was part of the LPO's Foyle Future Firsts development scheme.

Having started harp lessons with Ieuan Jones, Alis went on to study with Caryl Thomas at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD), where she obtained her Bachelor and Master's degrees. As part of her studies, Alis also spent time in Amsterdam on the Erasmus scheme, studying with renowned harpist Erika Waardenburg.

At RWCMD, she was awarded the Midori Matsui Prize for Music, the Royal Welch Fusiliers Harp Prize, the McGrennery Chamber Music Prize, and the Rev. Paul Bigmore Music in the Community Award. She was made an Honorary Associate there in 2022 (ARWCMD). Her studies were generously supported by the Tillett Trust, The Biddy Baxter and John Hosier Trust, the Arts Council of Wales, the EMI Sound Foundation and a Help Musicians UK Postgraduate Award.

<https://www.alishuws.com/>

About World of Sound

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<http://www.worldofsound.uk.com/>



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