

# Côr Cymry Gogledd America Finds a New Beat!

By Mari Morgan

When life went into shutdown mode back in March, and the music around us all stopped, the choristers of Côr Cymry Gogledd America (North American Welsh Choir) reached out to each other and stayed singing. What began as checking in on one another and a virtual hug – or a cwtsch di-dwtsh - via Zoom, quickly became a new dimension for the community choir that spans a continent.

Every Saturday morning without fail, Côr Cymry Gogledd America assembles for Z-Rehearsals at 11am (eastern), and in all other time zones across North America, and also 4pm in Wales. The Zoom squares light up as choristers from 16 states and Ontario in Canada eagerly get ready for another interactive session.

Over the last 13 weeks, Côr Cymry choristers have sung together and embraced special new projects, hosted distinguished special guest speakers from Wales, and – most exciting, welcomed new and talented young choristers from across the US into our now, truly virtual choral community.

Together, we have stood “at the doorstep” with the people of Wales singing “Hen wlad fy Nhadau” as part of the #SingforWales! campaign, in thanks to the essential workers everywhere who keep us safe and well. As the youth of Wales reformatted and prepared a new time-sensitive, “Peace and Goodwill Message” to greet the youth of the world on May 18, Côr Cymry Gogledd America undertook a peace project to



Côr Cymry Gogledd America responds to the Peace and Goodwill Message, May 18, 2020.

form a sung reply. One of our favorite songs, Y Tangnefeddwyr (The Peacemakers) was a cornerstone to the Côr Cymry reply, and what a thrill when its distinguished composer, Eric Jones, joined our z-rehearsal from his home in Wales to share his perspective and insights with us.

Another Saturday, the renowned writer, poet and educator, Mererid Hopwood visited with us and discussed the benefits of thinking, speaking and ultimately singing in different languages in a multilingual world. A rich presentation that began with Mererid showing and discussing the delicate beauty of a simple bunch of newly picked wildflowers from the Carmarthenshire countryside, moved with purpose to

topics that included, collaborating with composers e.g. Robat Arwyn and Sir Karl Jenkins, writing for specific voices such as Sir Bryn Terfel – and for special celebrations such as the 90th anniversary song – “Lle mae llais yn cyffwrdd lleisiau / Where our voices find each other” for NAFOW 2019 and the Welsh North American community. As chorister, Rod O. remarked, “Mererid’s passion for Cymraeg in verse and song is eloquent and contagious!”

At the time of writing this article, Côr Cymry is completing its first special recording to launch of a brand-new, Wales-North America hymn. “Tir Iarll” by Kim Lloyd Jones was the first winner of the Daniel Protheroe Award at the

NAFOW Milwaukee 2019 Eisteddfod. The hymn tune has brand new words in both Welsh and English - “Gweld y byd fel dylau fod / See the world as it should be” – by Mererid Hopwood. Initially due to be launched at this year’s NAFOW Cymanfa Ganu in Philadelphia, Côr Cymry Gogledd America is thrilled to be singing and sharing this new and moving combination of words and music with the world. Look out for it!

This is a time for self-care and staying well, and so is the case with vocal health as we all find ways to sing during these anxious days. The renowned international voice teacher, Arwel Treharne Morgan, joined Côr Cymry from his studio via Zoom and shared his wealth of experience of working with opera singers, and gave us as choristers, many helpful pointers to sustain our singing.

Other talented musicians who have visited with Côr Cymry are composer and organist, Meirion Wynn Jones who discussed his new arrangement of

“Calon Lân” for the choir, as well as harpist, pianist, and “Tir Iarll” composer, Kim Lloyd Jones. Both Meirion and Kim joined us from their homes in Carmarthenshire.

The limitations of this time have sparked Côr Cymry Gogledd America’s collective imagination in how we sing together and make music. Even though we are traveling along new and uncharted ways, the warmth of the friendships, the love of Welsh song, and the strength of the camaraderie shines a bright guiding light ahead.

“How ironic in this time of greater restriction,” said alto, Nancy W., “we are spanning not only the continent but the world!”

If you are interested in singing with Côr Cymry Gogledd America, contact Mari Morgan on corcymry20@gmail.com.

We are just getting going!

## Professor Mererid Hopwood from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David was one of the inaugural prize winners of the Emyr Humphreys Award



Professor Mererid Hopwood, UWTSU.

Mererid Hopwood was awarded the Welsh language prize with journalist, Mark S Redfern awarded the English language accolade.

The award was given to the most daring and innovative writing about Wales, in Welsh and in English, published during 2019 - Emyr Humphrey’s centenary. The announcement came on the author’s 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.

The pieces were nominated by PEN Cymru members, and the winners were selected from the long list by the adjudicators Siân Northey, Eluned Gramich and Professor Daniel Williams.

Mererid Hopwood was awarded for her essay ‘Doethineb Iaith’ (‘Wisdom of Language’), published in the Summer 2019 issue of *O’r Pedwar Gwynt*.

Siân Northey says in her adjudication: “Mererid Hopwood’s clear rationale and her linguistic agility to naturally convey that rationale succeeds in creating a piece that will be of interest to everyone in Wales and beyond who is interested in the relationship between language and identity.”

Mererid Hopwood has been teaching for most of the last thirty years in the field of language and literature. She is now Professor of Languages and Welsh Curriculum at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Mark S Redfern was awarded for his essay ‘When Vice came

to Swansea’, published in *Planet*, Winter 2019. The essay describes, and criticises, a documentary video made by Vice which became a population on YouTube.

Discussing the competition as well as Emyr Humphreys’ contribution to Welsh literature, Menna Elfyn, Wales PEN Cymru President, said: “It is difficult to think of another literary figure who has contributed more to the two literatures of Wales than Emyr Humphreys. He has published some two dozen works of fiction, plays and scripts for television, poetry collections, seminal essays as well as a visionary cultural history of Wales. This achievement is indeed remarkable, to have sustained a remarkable career spanning over seventy years as a writer. What better way to note his achievement, and celebrate his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, than establishing an award in Wales PEN Cymru’s name, an institution that, like Emyr himself, advocates freedom of speech and promotes literature in every country.”

Both winners are awarded £500 each, and an online event will be held at the end of the month, with the winners and adjudicators, where there will be an opportunity to hear a reading of the winning pieces.

For further information about Wales PEN Cymru, please visit <http://walespencymru.org/>



## Neges Heddwch ac Ewyllys Da gan bobl ifanc Cymru 2020

Message of Peace and Goodwill from the young people of Wales 2020



### Stop the Clock and Start Again

Stopio'r Cloc ac Ailddechrau

Annwyl bobl y byd  
Mae natur wedi ein hysgwyd –  
mae'n galw arnom i ddeffro  
Ry'n ni'n gwario'n ddiangen  
Ry'n ni'n gwastraffu'n ddiangen  
Ry'n ni'n teithio'n ddiangen

Annwyl ieuencid y byd  
Nawr yw'r amser i ddiolch  
Diolch i'r rheiny ar y rheng flaen  
sydd wedi ein helpu i gario mlaen  
A gyda'n gilydd gallwn greu dyfodol gwell  
Dyfodol o edrych ar ôl ein hunain ac o eraill  
Dyfodol o gofio am y llai ffodus yn ein cymunedau  
Dyfodol o ofalu am y blaned  
Gweithredwch

Annwyl arweinwyr y byd  
Mae Coronafeirws wedi stopio'r cloc  
Gwrandewch ar bobl ifanc Cymru a'r byd  
yn sefyll gyda'n gilydd  
Gweithredwch drwy gymryd cyfrifoldeb  
dros ein dyfodol ni  
Mae'r byd wedi deffro.  
Nawr deffrwch chi.

To the people of the world  
Nature has shaken us – awakened us  
We are spending needlessly  
We are wasting needlessly  
We are travelling needlessly

To the young people of the world  
The time has come for thanks  
Thank you to the front line workers  
who've been our lifeline  
Together we can create a better future  
A future of caring for ourselves and others  
A future of caring for the less fortunate  
in our communities  
A future of caring for our planet  
It's time to act

Dear leaders of the world  
Coronavirus has stopped the clock  
Listen to the young people of Wales and  
the world, standing together  
Act now and be responsible for our future  
The world has awoken  
Now you must wake up too.