

The Globe and Mail, Monday Sept. 7, 1959

### WELSH SINGERS PROVE FIRST-RATE AMATEURS

The domestic atmosphere so characteristic of Welsh music-making was much in evidence at the Noson Lawen--the "merry evening"--on Saturday by the National Gymanfa Ganu Association of the United States and Canada. For, despite the splendors of the Royal York Hotel's vast Canadian Room, and the enormous international crowd assembled therein, the distinguished presidency of Senator W. Rupert Davies, and the civic lustre shed by the presence of Mayor Phillips and his party, this was essentially a demonstration of the music of the chapel and schoolroom, and the domestic hearth.

The amateur vocalists, solo and choral, the elocutionists and improvisers, who came to the platform at the call of the genial master of ceremonies, Rev. Hedd-Wyn Williams, were clearly not primarily actuated by ambitions of technical or artistic achievement, but simply by their desire to practise their art for its own sake, and for what it does to the human spirit--the truly personal and domestic outlook.

There is nothing derogatory to Welsh music in stressing this--on the contrary, it is the main source of its continuing strength. Radio and TV, hi-fi and FM, reduce too many of us to the status of listeners--mere passive receivers instead of active participants; and this engenders a poor climate for the healthy growth of music in the future. Do-it-yourself is an essential disposition for that; and any nation that still fosters music-making at the domestic level, is to be commended--and envied.

The same spirit, albeit operating in a more formalized setting, was apparent in the sessions devoted to sacred music--the Gymanfa proper--on Sunday afternoon (at which the Ontario Government was represented by Attorney-General T. Kelso Roberts) and evening which also afforded an ~~impressive~~ impressive demonstration of the results to which it can lead.

Pleasing contributions were made by the soloists, Margaret Evans Millichamp and Gwynn Owen, and by the Ontario Gymanfa Ganu Choir, but it was the gathering itself, under the direction of Mrs. Ann Davies Thomas, that showed the heights to which the domestic approach can lead. For this purely miscellaneous and ad hoc get-together spontaneously achieved better results than many a fully-organized choir; they sang in full harmony, with excellent balance and blend, firm rhythm and attack, and a sweetness of tone and a sensitive response to the shading indicated by the conductor that can only be called astonishing.

When 3,000 people, most of whom only met the day before yesterday, can do such things together without rehearsal--there isn't much wrong with the national culture that has nurtured them.-- Frank Haworth.