



Welsh Traditional Music

Phyllis Kinney

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Welsh traditional music has, until now, been the 'Cinderella' of world music studies. Over the years, few English-language writers have paid it any attention, largely because the majority of the songs of Wales are in the Welsh language. Now, at last, that gap has been filled by an American. Phyllis Kinney's book, *Welsh Traditional Music*, will both delight and inform anyone with an interest in the subject, be they a general reader, an academic, or a performer. It covers the traditional music of Wales from its beginnings through to the present day and contains an extensive selection of more than 200 musical examples. The book not only includes musical analysis of many of the examples, but also places the songs firmly in their social and historical context. Among the many different forms of Welsh traditional music discussed are seasonal music (including wassail songs, Christmas and May carols and Plygain carols), folk drama, ballad-singing, the relevance of the eisteddfod and the musical journals of the nineteenth century,. In addition, it includes a history of collecting from the eighteenth century to the establishment and on-going activities of the Welsh Folk-Song Society in the twentieth. Both the the instrumental and the vocal traditions are examined and there is a section dealing with the uniquely Welsh tradition of 'cerdd dant'. Overall, the value of the book lies not only in its ground-breaking nature and the quality of its scholarship, but in its discussion of Welsh traditional music in the context of the Welsh musical tradition generally. Phyllis Kinney is an American who has steeped herself in the culture, and become fluent in the language, of her adopted country. She is an acknowledged authority on the traditional music of Wales and has produced a book which will become a classic.

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