

## **The Eisteddfod.** **by Philip Humphries**

To begin to describe our planned program for the North American Festival of Wales, in this month's article we describe our eisteddfod competition. We decided to highlight this segment first so as to give all of those interested in competing the incentive to come and the practice time needed. But first a little history:

According to the National Eisteddfod of Wales internet web site ([www.eisteddfod.org.uk](http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk)), the history of the eisteddfod can be traced back to 1176 when it is said that the first eisteddfod was held, under the auspices of Lord Rhys, at his castle in Cardigan. There he held a grand gathering to which were invited poets and musicians from all over the country. A chair at the Lord's table was awarded to the best poet and musician, a tradition that prevails in the modern day National Eisteddfod.

Many of us who grew up in Wales remember competing in our school St David's Day eisteddfod or sitting in the audience, sometimes with tears in our eyes. (Sorry to disillusion you, but the tears were caused by the odor of large leeks crushed under youthful feet).

Since its inclusion in the 1994 National Gymanfa held in Bellevue, Washington, the eisteddfod has become a popular feature of the Labor Day weekend activities now called the North American Festival of Wales. The 2003 Eisteddfod continues this tradition, and will feature a new competition with a very attractive prize.

In planning the 2003 Eisteddfod, the committee had three goals:

- 1) To attract more youth – to do this, we have specifically included youth (under age 18) competitions for both solo and group voices.
- 2) To introduce a competition (with a significant prize) which will enable the North American Festival of Wales to develop a closer association with the National Eisteddfod of Wales.
- 3) To provide an opportunity for adults to participate in singing and spoken competitions.

The competition choices are always difficult because of the time constraints, but with the helpful comments of previous eisteddfod organizers, we are planning the following offerings.

### SESSION I (Friday morning)

There will be two youth competitions — solo voice, followed by youth choruses. Competitors in these events must be under the age of 18 on the day of the eisteddfod. Each soloist and choir will sing two pieces, at least one of which must be in Welsh.

### SESSION II (Friday afternoon)

The first event will be a semi-professional solo competition. (A “semi-professional” is defined as someone whose income is derived only partially from performing.) Competitors will sing two pieces, one of which must be in Welsh.

This new event has a very special prize -- thanks to the generosity of David G. Morris of Florida, who has agreed to sponsor this competition, the winner will fly to Wales and compete in the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2004 (July 31-August 7, near Newport), with air fare and one week of accommodation expenses paid. Closer to home, the winner will perform at our Sunday afternoon Gymanfa special music time, giving those who miss the NAFOW eisteddfod another chance to hear this very talented singer.

As this competition is sure to attract a large number of highly qualified singers, entrants will be asked to provide an audition tape or CD so that if there are too many entries to fit in the allocated time, the contest participants can be selected in advance by the adjudicator, on the basis of the submitted recordings.

The second event of the Friday afternoon session will be the adult choir competition. Each choir will sing two contrasting pieces, one of which must be in Welsh.

### SESSION III (Saturday morning)

This session will begin with a story-telling contest, which was very popular at Harrisburg last year. This is an opportunity to tell your favorite folk tale or perhaps just stretch the truth little bit.

The second event of this session, and the last competition of the eisteddfod, will be the amateur solo voice contest. As in the other voice competitions, entrants will sing two pieces, one of which must be in Welsh.

Entry forms and competition rules will be mailed with the Festival registration package and will also be available on the NAFOW Web site at [www.nafow.org](http://www.nafow.org). For further information, or if you have questions, please contact Philip Humphries

## **North American Festival of Wales notes:**

### *Evening afterglow informal singing: Directors and Accompanists*

Planners of the North American Festival of Wales, are inviting volunteers to lead the nightly "spontaneous" late evening singing. The fine tradition of informal hymn singing at the end of each day of the Festival will be continued in '03 and the organizers are asking interested parties to signal their interest in directing or accompanying such occasions.

As experienced attendees know well, the casual nightly gatherings for times of song are a highly popular element of these annual events. Anyone interested in volunteering to lead at one or more of the informal songfests is asked to contact the NAFOW Informal Singing Coordinator, Thomas Gething

***Market Place:***

We are now beginning to plan the details of the Welsh Market Place at the North American Festival of Wales, one of the popular events of the Festival. The Market Place allows all the registrants and all local residents of the host city to browse through the many offerings, covering all facets of Welsh crafts and literature, both traditional and contemporary. Many people take this opportunity to conduct some early Christmas shopping. If you are interested in securing space to display materials and sell goods at the North American Festival of Wales, August 28-31, 2003 then please contact: Gerri Baker Parry

***Program Adverts:***

The NAFOW booklet that will be given to every registrant at the weekend is in the process of assembly. Persons or groups interested in placing an announcement or advertisement should contact Rhidian Lawrence. Advertising rates for eighth, quarter, half and full pages will soon be available on our web site [www.nafow.org](http://www.nafow.org) or from Rhidian

**Comment: Over the coming months we will be describing details of our program. While the NAFOW calendar dates are fixed, some of the planned activities may change. The information that we provide now may therefore be subject to some modification if the circumstances of contributors change. If this happens, we will let readers know as soon as possible. You should also keep reading because we hope to have a few surprises up our sleeves.**