

This month we highlight three more artists who will be performing at the North American Festival of Wales. In common with the Festival artists whom we have described in previous articles, the three artists featured this month – Bronn and Katherine Journey, and Jeffrey Howard – all share the gift of outstanding musicianship. Since music is the foundation of the Welsh heritage and experience, our goal has been to bring the best that we could attract to the 2003 Festival, and the members of the planning team are thrilled that each of our invited guests has agreed to come and be an essential part of the Festival. Also we now introduce our very special Minister for the bilingual Sunday Service and Gymanfa prayers.

Bronn and Katherine Journey

Bronn Journey and his wife Katherine will host the after-banquet entertainment at the North American Festival of Wales. He is well known across North America as a professional harpist and entertainer, and is *very* well known in the Welsh communities of the northwestern United States and in western Canada.

His grandfather emigrated from Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales and became one of the celebrated directors of the early Welsh cymanfaoedd in the Puget Sound region. Bronn is very proud of that Welsh heritage. He is a strong supporter of Welsh activities and regularly hosts the Puget Sound Welsh Association St. David's Day festivities. Bronn was the host at the noson lawen at the National Gymanfa Ganu in Bellevue, WA in 1994 and we are so pleased to have him return.

Bronn began playing harp at age 11, and by the time he was 16, he was performing professionally in fine hotels and restaurants in the Seattle area. He earned a bachelor of music degree in harp performance from the University of Washington School of Music, and has been much in demand ever since.

His versatile style and relaxed, humorous approach to a "seriously classical" instrument have made him a favorite with concertgoers. Bronn's Christmas concerts always play to sell-out audiences. His concert selections range from classical to Broadway and include much Welsh music. Bronn has 14 recordings on his own label, Phileo Music, which are sold in fine gift shops across the US and Canada and on his Web site www.phileomusic.com

His wife Katherine, a native of Calgary, Alberta, began her musical training at age eight with piano lessons. She studied piano through high school and college, and earned a music education degree from Dordt College (Iowa). Although piano was her primary instrument, Katherine, a soprano, always loved singing in choirs and small ensembles. She studied voice at the Arizona State University School of Music, earning a master's degree in vocal performance. Since then, in addition to being a fulltime wife and mother, she has appeared regularly in concert with Bronn, and in 1998, she recorded a CD with him, "Journeys Together."

Jeffrey Howard: Cymanfa Accompanist

The planning team of the North American Festival of Wales is delighted to announce that the accompanist for the 72nd National Gymanfa Ganu will be Jeffrey Howard from Wales. Jeffrey was born, and still lives, in Cardiff. He began piano studies at an early age, and while still at school, was awarded a scholarship to study piano at the Welsh College of Music and Drama. After earning a bachelor of music degree from University of Wales College, Cardiff, Jeffrey took the advanced organ course and the church music course at the Royal Academy of Music, where he received several prizes for piano and organ performance.

Jeffrey has an active freelance career as organist, pianist, singer, coach, and conductor. He made his debut in London's Royal Albert Hall in May 2002, performing Shostakovich's second piano concerto with All Souls Orchestra. He has performed in concert halls and cathedrals throughout the United Kingdom and Europe, including Wigmore Hall and St. Paul's Cathedral (London), The Goethe Institute (Brussels), St. George's Chapel (Windsor), and Notre Dame Cathedral (Paris). Among the orchestras he has worked with as a performer and arranger are The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Budapest Symphony Orchestra.

For the last ten years, Jeffrey has been a vocal coach at the Welsh College of Music and Drama and on many of the Welsh National Opera's major productions. In addition, he has accompanied singers from several of the world's leading opera houses, and as a choral accompanist, has worked with many male voice choirs, including the BBC Welsh Chorus and the Swansea Bach Choir. He is currently the musical accompanist for the Duvant Male Choir and will be touring with them on their visit to North America this year.

Jeffrey has made several television and radio appearances at home and abroad and has performed on many recordings. He appears as organist on Bryn Terfel's "We'll Keep a Welcome" CD, and recently released a solo piano CD which includes his arrangements of hits from stage and screen. Jeffrey recorded a CD of popular organ music while he was guest artist in residence (1996-1997) at First United Methodist Church in Lubbock, Texas, and visiting professor of organ at Texas Tech University.

He also devotes time to arranging, most recently having orchestrations performed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. Jeffrey is a regular arranger for BBC's "Songs of Praise." He is married to harpist Rachael Jones, and they can frequently be heard in duo performances.

In addition to accompanying the Gymanfa, Jeffrey will also act as special accompanist to our Eisteddfod entrants. He will be our 'accompanists for the Festival.'

Rev. Ben Rees.

The minister for the Sunday morning bilingual Church Service is the Rev, Ben Rees, currently minister at the Welsh Presbyterian Chapel in South Liverpool. Rev. Rees was born in Llanddewi Brefi in Ceredigion Wales, He graduated from The University of Wales Aberystwyth in 1959 and was awarded the Pierce Scholarship at the United Theological College, from where he graduated with his Bachelor of Divinity. He was ordained to Presbyterian Church of Wales in 1962 after which he ministered for nearly seven years in the Aberdare valley of South Wales. For the last 40 years Ben has traveled the world ministering. He has preached in all of the Welsh Chapels in Patagonia, and in 1987, he spent 6 months at the Presbyterian Church in Akron, Ohio

Ben also has a Ph.D in political studies, an M.A in Celtic Studies and a M.Sc.(economics), is Moderator of the North Association and has been Professor of Theology.

Not content with his academic qualifications, while a student Ben was twice recognized by the BBC as the best debater amongst all students at the University of Wales, and he has during his career written 33 books in Welsh and 15 books in English, and also many articles on many topics including prominent hymn writers.

Ben will be traveling with his wife and several other members of the Cymru A'r Byd (Wales International) organization who are turning the special visit to Richmond for the North American Festival of Wales into a never to be forgotten holiday on the west coast of North America.