

Morfydd Llwyn Owen was born in the Welsh valleys (Treforest) in 1891. She displayed a precocious early talent – one of her hymn tunes was published in the Welsh Hymnal while she was still a teenager. She studied initially at Cardiff University and then at the Royal Academy of Music, where her prize-winning record remains unequalled.

Morfydd had an engaging personality and was extraordinarily beautiful – it was said she received 20 proposals of marriage before she was 20 years old. She socialised with the Bohemian Hampstead intelligentsia, including DH Lawrence and Ezra Pound, and was also friendly with the flamboyant Prince Yusupov, one of the conspirators who assassinated Rasputin.

There is significant evidence to suggest that Morfydd suffered from what we would now refer to as Bipolar Disorder. She was attracted to powerful charismatic men and married Ernest Jones (the first British psychoanalyst and biographer, friend and confidante of Sigmund Freud) within six weeks of their first meeting, in February 1917. There are reports that Jones discouraged her musical career; certainly her musical output evaporated after their marriage.

In September 1918, while on holiday at Ernest's father's house, Craig y Môr, at Mumbles, Swansea, Morfydd contracted acute appendicitis. Ernest decided to perform the appendectomy at home, and Morfydd died a few days later as a result of delayed chloroform poisoning, aged 26. The tragic and mysterious nature of her death has stimulated much conjecture over the years. Apart from the suspicious circumstances, it transpires that no post-mortem was carried out and that Morfydd was buried two weeks before the death certificate was issued.

Morfydd Owen left behind an astonishing legacy of dramatic and intensely passionate music, most of it currently unpublished. There has been a resurgence of interest in the years leading up to the anniversary of her death. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales featured Morfydd's orchestral tone poem, *Morfa Rhuddlan* as part of the BBC Proms season in 2014, and *Tŷ Cerdd* is currently in the process of publishing her previously unpublished compositions.

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