

## Variations on 'Cadair Idris' (2022 revision)

Although local hotel keepers will tell you that *Cadair Idris* (Chair of Idris) is the second highest mountain in Wales that, is not, of course, true. What is true, however, is the peak is magnificently separated from other mountains: summit views (when the mist lifts) are panoramic. Those wishing to meet the legendary giant Idris are encouraged to spend the night alone on the mountain's top; Welsh folklore promises that, if they wake at all, they will wake to be either famous poets (*beirdd*) or madmen! The original *Cadair Idris* melody is in the major mode and was composed by the *bardd* & harpist John Parry and first appeared in 1804. It is one of Wales' best know 'folk' tunes.

Many Christmases ago I heard this old melody played on a neglected piano in my daughter's house in Llanilar. On a short walk in the dying winter light its magic melody (all the more desolate as out of tune) accompanied me everywhere. It became part of the grey cheerless winter landscape; unresolved echoes of a forlorn world. But that bleak landscape was not dead, only sleepy. Many creatures: some in holes in ferny banks, some hidden deep in bare hedgerows, some in muddy fields, heard that sad magic. Those many wonderful animals were waiting patiently through the winter for their spring and summer. In this piece they have their chance to wake, to sing, speak or dance.

### Notes on Each Movement:

Prelude: *Yr Fwyalchen* (The Blackbird). Early evening, or early morning, his song is very sweet.

*Dawns y Fuwch Hapus* (The Happy Cow's Dance). Yes, cows can dance – just like any other animal – just a little bit ungainly.

*Y Wennol Ddu* (The Swift). Swifts nest in my neighbour's house and roost in mine. The air is full of their excited voices as they twist and turn in free space.

*Dawns y Mochyn Daear* (The Badger's Dance). Our old house even had a badger set. Amazing how quickly he wrecks a lawn – in Welsh his name literally means 'ground pig'!

*Llethrau* (Slopes) Wales has more than its fair share of slippery slopes – beautiful to gaze upon, but start sliding down wet grass and it is terrifying how far you slither.

*Y Niwyl ar Ben y Mynydd* (The Mist on the Mountain Top). Mountain mist is amazing stuff – so illusory, so deceiving; strangely often brightening when it should be darkening; occasionally clearing completely only to return to yet baffle further.

*Y Llyn* (The Lake) Glistening in the summer sunlight little waves sparkle like jewels – but underneath lie dangerous depths of darkness.

*Y Hebog* (The Kite). The Mid-Wales bird of prey – so subtle, so patient; yet so quick, unpredictable and deadly.

*Y Hen Gadno Cyfrwys* (The Cunning Old Fox). We follow the fox as he works his way slyly through trees and undergrowth – as we finish he's ready to pounce.

*Mae'r Golomen yn Hedfan i Ryddid* (The Dove Flies to Freedom). Even the cunning fox cannot follow into the third dimension – all he, like we, can do is look up at the white dove silhouetted against a pure blue sky.

*Yr Afon* (The River) Above the irresistible flow of the river the scenery changes constantly – two thirds of the way through there's a total change of mood, we meet the sea and begin dancing on the waves.

Postlude: *Yr Eos* (The Nightingale) A return to the mood of the opening – the Nightingale echoes the Blackbird.

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