

Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know

Max Boyce



MAX BOYCE, singer-songwriter, poet and entertainer, was born in the village of Glynneath, south Wales, where he still lives with his wife, Jean. Despite the fact that his father was killed in a mining explosion a month before Max was born, Max went on to work underground in the local colliery at the age of sixteen – a profession he remained in for over a decade.

After releasing two records on a small Welsh label, in 1973 he recorded his iconic breakthrough album, *Live at Treorchy*, which went on to sell over half a million copies. Several gold and silver records followed, including *We All Had Doctors' Papers*, which went to number one in the UK Albums Chart. He has since toured the world, playing sell-out concerts in some of the world's great venues, including the London Palladium, Sydney Opera House and the Royal Albert Hall. He was awarded an MBE in 1999 and received the Freedom of the Borough of Neath and Port Talbot in 2013, following in the footsteps of Sir Richard Burton and Sir Anthony Hopkins.



Summary:

When 'Hymns and Arias' rang out at Cardiff Arms Park some fifty years ago, those great Welsh anthems 'Calon Lan' and 'Cwm Rhondda' had found a companion and the valleys of south Wales had produced a new folk hero. Max Boyce's work, with over five decades of creativity, captures the spirit and the story of the people of Wales. It also has a warmth and charm that has made his words and music resonate with a worldwide audience.

Compiling – in some instances for the first time in print – the very best songs, poems and stories from across his celebrated career, *Max Boyce: Hymns & Arias* is the definitive selected work of a major cultural figure who, through his inimitable humour, uniquely Welsh pathos and masterful wordcraft, has defined a nation and its people for more than half a century. Published by Parthian, 28 October 2021.

Many congratulations Max on *Max: Hymns & Arias* - tell us a little about the new book & what do you hope readers will take away from it ...

Hymns & Arias was a natural title inspired by the song of the same name.

It is a collection of some of my favourite poems, songs and stories, as well as some cartoons of my songs by my old friend Gren, for we both drew with the same pencil.

There are also fine illustrations by Anne Cakebread, Fran Evans, Darryl 'Gren' Jones and Rhys Padarn Jones that accompany some of my songs like 'Close the Coalhouse Door', 'Is God in His Paint Shop', 'Rhondda Grey', 'When Just the Tide Went Out', 'The Glory That Was Rome' and 'Hymns and Arias'. They have given my work another dimension.

I'm sure many people will recognise themselves in the lyrics, for they have walked the same path and travelled the same journey. They have experienced the same joys and endured the same disappointments.

Have music and stories always played a part in your life from a young age?

Music and poetry have always played a big part in my life and I loved Eifion Wyn's 'Cwm Pennant' and the monologues of my childhood, Abiah Roderick's (Trebanos) 'Hen Genuine' ('Old Genuine'), which should always be read in a Swansea Valley dialect (tafodiaeth Cwm Tawe). And then there were the epic poems 'The Green Eye of the Yellow God' ('There's a one-eyed yellow idol to the north of Khatmandu...'), 'The Man from Snowy River' and 'The Song of Hiawatha' ('By the shore of Gitche Gume...').

My poem 'The Incredible Plan' was inspired by these and I can still recite them to this day.

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