

**A Cambrian Debut.**  
**Millennium Centre Cardiff**  
**6<sup>th</sup> March 2011**  
**by**  
**Roy Gibbins**

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It finally arrived. Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and six new members are making their debut for Cambrian Male Voice Choir. We are appearing at the Wales Millennium Centre in a concert for the Teenage Cancer Charity Trust. I am one of them and rising at 7.00am. I am surprisingly relaxed about it all. A bath,

breakfast, another look at the music and its time to get the gear. I check to make sure I have my jacket, my white shirt, my trousers, shoes, tie and belt. Then I check to make sure I have them again. I must have checked them six times, with my wife also checking once. It's down to the Bush Hotel at 10.15am to wait for the Edwards bus. I clamour aboard and a few choristers are already there. There's a friendly bit of banter and I sit near the toilet. Did I say I was feeling relaxed? The old butterflies are just awakening.

We pick up the remaining members and wives and finally arrive in Cardiff Bay at 11.30am. Then it's straight into the Millennium Centre and we are taken to our dressing room. I've never been in a theatre's dressing room before. I wonder if there will be lights around the mirrors. Ah no! Our dressing room resembles a cold airplane hanger, and we share it with three other choirs. Our dinner is at 12 o'clock so we head straight to the canteen. We queue for 15 minutes before tucking in to an enjoyable beef dinner. I look to the experienced members to see what is happening next. We have an hour before rehearsals. Will we take in the sights of Cardiff Bay, or perhaps visit a museum? Instead we head for the nearest watering hole to sup a few j2o's. Fred holds court and the conversation flows.

We return to the Theatre for the 1.45pm rehearsal. It's a bit of a jostle for the seats but we finally settle. The empty theatre is spread before us, it is a magnificent sight. We chat to fellow choristers from Hereford Police and London Welsh. A good set of lads. I take a few photographs. Dr Alwyn Humphreys then conducts us through the program with some

constructive advice and cutting humour. The 1st bass section is seated three rows from the front. No hiding place! Why do I think he's staring at me every time he looks our way? On some numbers the tenor section sing alone. Their vocals reverberate through the empty theatre. It sounds wonderful. The magnificent Cory band is in front of us leading the way. They are incredibly talented musicians and worthy World Champions.

A concert producer spells out some rules at the end of rehearsals. Every chorister must be seated by 4.45pm. Jackets are to be worn with the buttons done up. When sitting, hands are to be placed on knees. Hang on now pal, I'm having trouble remembering all the words never mind remembering how to sit! Two hours later rehearsals finish. I look to the experienced members to see what is happening next. We have an hour before curtain up. Will we take in the sights of Cardiff Bay, or perhaps visit a museum? Instead we head for the nearest watering hole to sup a few j2o's. That sounds familiar!

We return to the dressing room at 4.20pm. I clamour to change surrounded by more varicose veins than I care to remember. Then it's to our seats. A hush descends and the curtain opens. What a sight! The hairs on the back of my neck are vertical already. A near capacity audience clap their welcome. We sing three numbers then sit. Internationally acclaimed soloists David Kempster (baritone) and Elizabeth Donovan (soprano) superbly perform their numbers. If that is how a baritone is supposed to sound I have some way to go! Some of our songs have a great crescendo and with the choirs going full blast the noise fills the theatre. Polo mints are handed around between songs. All too soon the last song 'Y Tangnefeddwyr' is sung, and the concert concludes. I feel ecstatic. What a fantastic experience. We go back to the 'dressing room' to change. Some of our members are lost in the maize of corridors backstage. I meet my family briefly in the foyer. All of them thought it was a wonderful concert and the acoustics were incredible. My son and daughter thought the crescendos were deafeningly brilliant.

We leave the Theatre 8.25pm and head to the Coedely Club for more j2o's. Many choristers tell us, they wish they had joined many years before they actually did. I now know why. An unforgettable occasion! The day was filled with song and laughter. A good way to describe Cambrian Male Voice Choir – Song and Laughter. Long may it continue!

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