

Exploring Music from the Robert ap Huw Manuscript with Bill Taylor

The Wire Branch of the Clarsach Society is pleased to sponsor an online course with Bill Taylor in medieval harp music from the Robert ap Huw manuscript. The course will consist of six monthly lessons running from January-June 2020 lasting 90 minutes each, using the Zoom platform. Zoom is a video conferencing platform which the Wire Branch uses for members joining in its monthly workshops. Participants will be sent a link via email prior to each meeting, and they simply need to click the link to be connected to the group on the day.

The music in the Robert ap Huw manuscript contains the earliest harp music from anywhere in Europe. The pieces were composed in the Late Middle Ages, taught aurally for several hundred years, written down in the 16th century and copied by Robert ap Huw himself in the early 17th century. We will learn how to read the tablature, allowing us to interpret both the letters, giving the names of the strings on the harp, and also the signs indicating the figuration. These provide instructions for how the player is to move between the strings, using a rigorous damping technique to distinguish between more-important and less-important strings.



The online course primarily serves as a review of two contrasting pieces: *Kaniad Llywelyn ab Ieuan ap y Gof* and *Kaniad y Wefl*, also known as *Kaniad yr Efail* – ‘*Kaniad of the Smithy*’, pieces which were explored in a Wire Branch workshop in August, 2019. With the information being new to so many of those students, the online course will offer a complete review of those pieces and we welcome new participants to join us as we start again from the beginning.

Participants will read from the original notation, and will need to acquire their own copy of the facsimile of the manuscript. You can download a free PDF from www.lulu.com and print your own copy, or you can order a hard-bound copy from Lulu. Search the website shop for ‘*Musica neu Berioriaeth*’ by Robert ap Huw. The price for the printed copy is £8.90, ex VAT + shipping. www.lulu.com/shop/robert-ap-huw/musica-neu-beroriaeth/hardcover/product-2780728.html

Also, please print a copy of Bill’s booklet ‘*Sources for Fingernail Harp Technique from Wales and Ireland*’, available as a free PDF download from <https://wirebranch.wordpress.com/sources-for-fingernail-technique/>

Kaniad Llywelyn ab Ieuan ap y Gof is found on pages 50-53 and *Kaniad y Wefl/Kaniad yr Efail* is on pages 66-67. For the course, please have paper copies of these available, but also have the rest of the manuscript to hand as references are made to specific pages.

Both pieces are in the tuning known as '*Bragod gywair*', with the strings tuned to the pitches *g - a - bb - c - d - eb - f*. The range of *Kaniad Llywelyn ab Ieuan ap y Gof* requires 19 strings, from *g - d*. This could either be from *g* at the bottom of the bass clef or from *g* just below Middle C. The choice is yours, whether you wish to play a large harp or a small harp. The range of *Kaniad y Wefl* requires 20 strings, from *g - eb*. If your harp has only 19 strings, it is possible to edit the music to find an alternative to the top *eb* needed in *Kaniad y Wefl*. Both gut-strung and wire-strung harps are welcome, but be aware that wire-strung harps will need additional damping not indicated within the notation.

The course will run as a block of six 90-min. sessions, available to Wire Branch members at £100; the non-member price will be £120. This can be paid either into the Wire Branch's Paypal account or directly into the bank account. To join the Wire Branch, please visit the website for the Clarsach Society, <https://www.clarsachsociety.co.uk/about-us/join>

The session times will be on Saturday mornings, 10.30am-12 noon UK time on these dates:

18th January 2020
15th February 2020
14th March 2020
18th April 2020
9th May 2020
13th June 2020

All six sessions will be recorded, which will be available to the participants. If you are unable to join us for a session you can catch up via the recording. For participants who are new to Zoom, a brief try-out session will be scheduled the week before the first session so that we can proceed efficiently on the 18th of January promptly at 10.30am. Please let us know if you would like to be part of the try-out session.

For more information, please contact Bill Taylor wirebranch@gmail.com