

# YMA O HYD

Dafydd Iwan



## ABOUT THIS SONG

Dafydd Iwan wrote this song in 1981 and it was published in 1983 when most of the coal mines in Wales were being closed. He wanted to write a positive song to show that Wales and the Welsh language were “still here” despite centuries of challenges and threats. It has since been adopted by ‘Y Wal Goch’ as the unofficial anthem of Welsh Football.

## THEMES/SUBJECTS

Welsh language, history of Wales, Welsh football

## CURRICULUM KEY LINKS

Languages, Literacy & Communication  
Humanities  
Health & Wellbeing  
Expressive Arts

## DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

### Vocal range

An 8th

### Vocal format

Unison/verse and chorus

### Musical elements

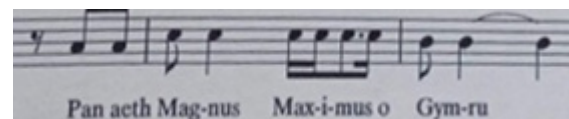
Rhythm and structure

### Musical characteristics

Unison, simple verse and chorus structure, compound time

## Warm-up Exercises

- Ask learners to stand completely relaxed with their feet slightly apart. They should stretch as tall as possible without lifting any part of their feet off the ground; and then lift their arms gradually forward and above their head as high as they can. Learners should repeat this exercise, this time standing on their tiptoes and stretching even taller.
- Ask learners to hum a siren, moving up and down in pitch, following your hand signal from above your head to low down by your waist.
- Learners should try to say ‘red lorry, yellow lorry’ four times, as fast as they can.
- Ask learners to sing a scale of A Minor (ABCDEFG#A1), ascending and descending to the numbers 1 to 8. Replace one of the numbers with a silence and try to perform. Gradually replace more numbers with a silence.
- Clap the following rhythm - ask learners to repeat it back. Then say the rhythm - learners to repeat it back:



## Suggested key links with other Areas, cross-cutting themes &/or local, national and international contexts

- Broaden your linguistic capabilities and learn the song in British Sign Language (BSL). Expert teaching and performance videos are available on the CânSing website.
- The song talks about ‘old Maggie and her crew’. Find out who Maggie and her crew were and what the political situation was at the time. For more history of the song and what influenced Dafydd Iwan to write it at the time, go to: <https://mentrauiath.cymru/en/history-of-the-popular-song-yma-o-hyd/>
- More recently, the song has been associated with the National Football Team and the FAW. Find out more about Wales’ journey to the World Cup 2022 here: <https://www.faw.cymru/en/>

**GRADING: CHALLENGING**

## Teaching and learning

- 1 Choose 'Full Track' and listen with learners to the first verse and chorus of the recording. After listening once, ask learners if they have heard the song before, if so, when?
- 2 Before beginning to sing the song, look at any words that might be tricky to pronounce or that have a dotted rhythm. e.g. 'Mae mil chwe chant o flynyddoedd', and 'Pan aeth Magnus Maximus o Gymru'. The rhythm for the word 'Maximus' looks complicated, but it is written like this to fit in the lyrics and actually mirrors how you would say the word.
- 3 Saying the words in the rhythm of the song before learning the melody can be useful. This helps with both pronunciation and rhythm. If you feel confident doing this, say the line aloud in the correct rhythm then ask the learners to repeat after you using an, 'I say, you say,' approach.
- 4 Next, teach the melody of the verse to the learners line by line using the 'I sing, you sing,' approach. If you don't feel confident doing this, play a line using the interactive screen, then toggle back to replay it for learners to sing along to.
- 5 The first three lines of the verse use the same three notes in a similar ascending pattern.
- 6 Watch out for the dotted rhythm pattern in lines 2 and 3. This gives a skipping effect.
- 7 The song is written in 6/8 and uses a lot of quaver-crotchet patterns e.g. on the words 'cofio', 'nabod', 'Magnus', 'Gymru', 'gyfan', 'heddiw', 'wele'. To avoid elongating the first beat, practise clapping this quaver crotchet rhythm then saying the words.
- 8 If learners struggle with a specific line, ask them to listen to you or the track and then join in. Repeat this until they are familiar and confident with it.
- 9 Play the chorus through then learn it using the 'I sing, you sing,' approach or by playing it on screen and repeating with the learners singing along.
- 10 The chorus uses a repeating descending pattern in the first two lines. It then repeats the words 'Er gwaethaf pawb a phopeth,' three times, moving up one note step each time before descending again repeating the line 'Ry'n ni yma o hyd'.

## Integral Skills

- Look at the meaning of the words in Verse 2. Practise and repeat and tricky words e.g. 'chwythed', 'rhued', 'hollted', 'wybren', 'gwaeddodd', 'dued', 'fagddu'. 'Llifed dagrau'r gwangalon a llyfed y taeog y llawr,' are a particular mouthful, so an 'I say, you say,' repetitive approach would be useful here.
- Once the words have been mastered, learn verse 2 using the 'I sing, you sing,' approach or using the interactive screen in the same way. Repeat the same process for Verse 3. Words to consider include: 'Facsen Wledig', 'bloeddiwn gerbron', 'gwledydd'.
- Perform the whole song, encouraging learners to sing clearly and avoid using their 'shouting' voice as the song gets higher in pitch. Once learners are confident, choose 'Track without voices' to sing the song independently. Encourage learners to perform with clear diction and plenty of emotion and passion on specific words, and to breathe two phrases at a time in the verse.

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## Statements of what matters:

- *Exploring the expressive arts is essential to developing artistic skills and knowledge and it enables learners to become curious and creative individual*
- *Creating combines skills and knowledge, drawing on the senses, inspiration and imagination*

- The chorus repeats several times throughout the song. Ask learners to consider how they could add some expression to their performance by varying the dynamics. e.g. Could they build up tension by singing the first 'Er gwaethaf pawb a phopeth,' quietly, then get louder on each repeat with the last line, 'Ry'n ni yma o hyd,' being the loudest.
- The piece has a clear chord structure in the key of A minor and uses the four chords of Am, E7, C and G. Learners could identify the notes in the triad of these four chords and use them to create a simple accompaniment to the song. A variation on this could be to use the notes within the chord triads to compose a simple descant melody or bass ostinato.
- Develop learners' openness to and curiosity about all languages and cultures of the world by learning and performing the song in British Sign Language. Ask learners to consider how they can effectively build the dramatic elements into the song through strong, confident signing. Our Good Practice Guide for BSL and this song can be found under our 'Good Practice' tab on the CânSing website.

## Assessment for Learning:

- *Responding and reflecting, both as artist and audience, is a fundamental part of learning in the expressive arts*

## Questioning

### Tool: Big question

Signing and singing together is very challenging because the signs and words don't go together. Consider the following:

- Why it is difficult to perform simultaneously in two languages?
- How is BSL is different from actions?
- What would this song look like with actions rather than BSL?
- Which is more powerful?

## Feedback

### Tool: Temporary comments

Give learners temporary comments on areas they need to develop. To improve their accuracy of rhythm, learners may need to revisit certain phrases and listen again to a recording. Give learners time to act upon these comments during the session, and then comment again to see if they have been successful.

## Self- and peer assessment

### Tool: Talking partners

Ask learners to share with a partner three new things they have learnt. For example:

- what they found easy or difficult
- what they need to improve
- something they would like to learn next



**GRADING: CHALLENGING**