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Dublin Core

Title

100 Minutes

Subject

Aviation

Hedfan

Fishguard and Goodwick

Abergwaun a Gwdig

History of Flight

Hanes Hedfan

Creator

Derek Webb

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

2023

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Relation

https://perma.cc/BZ83-2SYD

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

51.99538631483134, -4.978962885362461

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

In 2012, the centenary of the first flight from Britain to Ireland was commemorated with a play, which itself made the journey across the Irish Sea from Pembrokeshire to Wexford.

Lede (Welsh)

Yn 2012 cafwyd drama yn dathlu canmlwyddiant yr hediad cyntaf o Brydain i Iwerddon, ac fe wnaeth hithau hefyd y daith ar draws Môr Iwerddon o Sir Benfro i Loch Garman [Wexford].

Story

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first flight from Britain to Ireland by Denys Corbett Wilson in April 1912, many activities were planned in Fishguard and Enniscorthy for the weekend of 20 to 22 April, 2012 including exhibitions, the publication of a new book, the unveiling of 100th anniversary plaques and memorials, flypasts and an aerobatic display. In Fishguard, Theatr Gwaun, local schools, St Mary’s Hall, Fishguard Bay Hotel, Phoenix Centre, Lota Park, Sea Scouts Hall, Goodwick Brass Band and hundreds of local people all got involved.

In addition, as part of these commemorations, I was commissioned to write a stage play based on the historic flight.

The plan was to perform the play in Theatre Gwaun, close to where Corbett Wilson took off for Ireland, and then in Wexford at the Arts Centre.

For financial considerations, the cast had to be kept small and the set needed to be easily transportable.

The design of the set was entrusted to Headstrong Productions who are based at Trinity College Carmarthen. and they came up with the idea of forming a backdrop based on two Bleriot aeroplane wings against which the action would take place.

Very early on I decided to call the play 100 minutes, being the time it took for the flight, and to make the performance last the same amount of time. Of necessity, other than Corbett Wilson himself, each actor had to play multiple roles, including Corbett Wilson’s mother, a mechanic, other airmen, a reporter, farmer and more – all of which called for actors with great versatility.

The cast was Nick Richards, Gerry Fitzpatrick, Huw Richards and Jessica Sandry. Nick Richards' stage credits include Tom Stoppard's 'Arcadia' at the Duke of York theatre in the

West End, 'The Turn of the Screw' at Bristol Old Vic and several Shakespeare productions, as well as appearances on East Enders and other television series. Huw Richards and Gerry Fitzpatrick had worked together before in several productions including Dylan Thomas' 'The Doctor and the Devils'. Jessica Sandry had toured extensively with a one woman show 'Being Doris Day' and with several renowned theatre companies including the award-winning Hijinx Theatre Company.

Some very fast costume and character changes were obviously needed and the cast did wonderfully. Many audience members I'm sure were convinced that we had a far larger cast than we actually did!

The play begins in a cottage in Bethune, France, during the First World War where Corbett-Wilson was stationed as a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps. He relates his Irish Sea crossing to his fellow pilots and his tale becomes the core of the play, leaving Wales the end of Act 1 and arriving for the second act.

The play concludes with his death – he was killed on a reconnaissance flight over enemy lines in May 1915 – and several members of the audience shed a tear at Jessica Sandry's portrayal of his mother receiving the news of her son's death.

The play - which marks both an important milestone in connections between Wales and Ireland and the tragedy of a life cut short by war - was extremely well received in both Fishguard and Wexford.

Story (Welsh)

Dathlwyd canmlwyddiant yr hediad cyntaf erioed o Brydain i Iwerddon, a wnaed gan Denys Corbett Wilson ym mis Ebrill 1912, gyda nifer o weithgareddau a gynhaliwyd yn Abergwaun ac yn Inis Córthaidh [Enniscorthy] dros benwythnos 20–2 Ebrill 2012. Yn eu plith roedd arddangosfeydd, lansiad cyfrol newydd, dadorchuddio placiau a chofebau, hediadau seremonïol a champau hedfan. Yn Abergwaun, daeth Theatr Gwaun, ysgolion lleol, Neuadd y Santes Fair, gwesty'r Fishguard Bay, Canolfan Phoenix, Parc Lota, Neuadd Cadlanciau'r Môr, Band Pres Gwdig a channoedd o bobl leol i gyd at ei gilydd i gymryd rhan.

Ac yn rhan o'r dathliadau, cefais innau fy nghomisiynu i ysgrifennu drama lwyfan wedi ei seilio ar yr hediad hanesyddol.

Y bwriad oedd perfformio'r ddrama yn Theatr Gwaun, yn agos at y fan lle cychwynnodd Corbett Wilson am Iwerddon, ac wedyn yng Nghanolfan y Celfyddydau yn Loch Garman.

Oherwydd ystyriaethau ariannol roedd yn rhaid cadw'r cast yn fychan, ac roedd gofyn gallu cludo'r set yn ddidrafferth.

Rhoddwyd y gwaith o ddylunio'r set i Headstrong Productions, sydd wedi'u lleoli yng Ngholeg y Drindod Caerfyrddin, a chawsant hwythau'r syniad o seilio'r cefndir ar gynllun dwy adain awyren Bleriot.

Yn gynnar iawn yn y broses, penderfynais mai *100 Minutes* fyddai teitl y ddrama, sef yr amser a gymerodd hi i gwblhau'r hediad, a byddai'r perfformiad yn cymryd yr un faint. O reidrwydd, roedd yn rhaid i bob actor chwarae sawl rôl, oni bai am yr un a fyddai'n portreadu Corbett Wilson ei hun. Roedd y cymeriadau'n cynnwys mam Corbett Wilson, peiriannydd, awyrenwyr eraill, gohebydd a ffermwr, ac roedd pob rôl yn galw am ddoniau hyblyg.

Y cast oedd Nick Richards, Gerry Fitzpatrick, Huw Richards a Jessica Sandry. Mae gwaith Nick Richards ar y llwyfan yn cynnwys rhannau yn *Arcadia* Tom Stoppard, a berfformiwyd

yn theatr y Duke of York yn y West End, a *The Turn of the Screw* yn yr Old Vic ym Mryste ac mewn sawl cynhyrchiad o ddramâu Shakespeare; mae hefyd wedi ymddangos ar *East Enders* a chyfresi teledu eraill. Roedd Huw Richards a Gerry Fitzpatrick wedi cydweithio ar sawl cynhyrchiad cyn hyn; yn eu plith *The Doctor and the Devils* gan Dylan Thomas. Roedd Jessica Sandry wedi teithio'n helaeth gyda'r sioe un-fenyw *Being Doris Day* a chyda sawl cwmni theatr enwog, yn cynnwys Hijinx sydd wedi ennill gwobrau am eu gwaith.

Yn y ddrama hon, roedd gofyn newid dillad a chymeriad yn gyflym dros ben, ac fe wnaeth pawb yn rhyfeddol. Rwy'n siŵr fod sawl un yn y gynulleidfa yn credu bod gennym gast llawer mwy nag oedd mewn gwirionedd!

Mae'r ddrama'n agor mewn bwthyn ym Methune, Ffrainc, yn ystod y Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, gan mai yno yr oedd Corbett Wilson yn beilot yn y Corfflu Awyr Brenhinol. Mae'n adrodd ei hanes yn hedfan dros Fôr Iwerddon wrth ei gyd-beilotiaid a'r stori honno yw craidd y ddrama, gyda'r cymeriad yn gadael Cymru ar ddiwedd Act 1 ac yn cyrraedd yn yr ail act.

Daw'r ddrama i ben gyda'i farwolaeth. Fe'i lladdwyd wrth iddo hedfan i ragchwilio dros linellau'r gelyn ym mis Mai 1915, a chollodd sawl un o'r gynulleidfa ddeigryn gyda phortread Jessica Sandry o'i fam yn derbyn y newydd.

Nodai'r ddrama garreg filltir bwysig yn y cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru ac Iwerddon yn ogystal â thrasiedi bywyd ifanc a gollwyd yn y rhyfel, a chafodd dderbyniad brwd yn Abergwaun ac yn Loch Garman.

Factoid

In 2012, a series of events were organised in both Fishguard and Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Denys Corbett Wilson's successful first flight from Britain to Ireland.

100 Minutes, a play by Derek Webb, marks an important moment in the history of aviation, and commemorates the life of aeroplaning pioneer, Denys Corbett Wilson, who was killed in action during the First World War.

Related Resources

Derek Webb, "100 Minutes", *Derek Webb*, 3 July, 2020, archived at https://perma.cc/6YZN-4TZS

County Echo, "Play that commemorates flight is a soaring success", 4 May, 2012, archived at https://perma.cc/YDR5-Q327

Maria Pepper, "Landmark flight to be commemorated in style", *Gorey Guardian*, 17 April, 2012, archived at https://perma.cc/5H3J-NMQE

Official Website