

For Special Edition

Beginning in 2017, the Malad Valley Welsh Festival honors the best poet in the Adult Poetry Competition by chairing the Festival Bard at the Finale program. The Bard will preside at the next year's Festival and have the honor of sitting in the Malad Valley Bard's Chair.

The tradition of chairing the bard began in the 1100s when groups of traveling bards (poets) would congregate in Wales to entertain each other with songs and poetry. In 1176 Lord Rhys invited poets and musicians from all over Wales to a grand gathering at his castle in Cardigan, where a chair at the Lord's table was awarded to the best poet and musician, a tradition that continues today.

The modern *eisteddfod* (meaning "to sit together") evolved from its ancient beginnings and has been held every year in Wales since the early 1800s except for 1914 and 1940 due to the World Wars. The Gorsedd of Bards was formed in 1819 as an association of poets, writers, musicians, and artists. Its members are known as druids, hearkening back to the pagan history of Wales when druids were the religious leaders of the country.

Every year at the Welsh *eisteddfod*, the winner for best long poem receives an ornately carved chair as the coveted first prize. All poems must be written in the difficult Welsh language and in the Welsh poetic form. Pageantry and tradition are part of the Chaining of the Bard with the Archdruid waving his 9-foot sword over the winning poet. The winner of the best poem in free meter receives a crown, and the winner of the prose competition receives a medal.

The Malad Valley Welsh Festival is not an *eisteddfod* although music and poetry are major parts of the Festival. The Archdruid is replaced by a Knight of the Festival, who escorts the winning Bard to the stage. The beautifully carved chair was donated by Bob Crowther; Shawn and Roxanne Albretsen and Shannon Evanson carved dragons and created the other designs that make it unique. Unlike in Wales, the Bard's Chair remains on display in City Hall after the Festival. The Bard receives a medal and presides at the next year's Festival from the Bard's Chair.

The Patsy Price Scott Poetry Prize is named for a poet who lives her entire life in Malad Valley and told stories about her early life through her poetry. Her family established the Prize after Patsy died a few years ago. The winner of the Prize receives a Welsh-themed decorative plate.

Blaine Scott, the 2023 Bard of the Festival, is the son of Patsy Scott and learned much about writing poetry from his mother. He will preside at this year's Festival. New this year will be the Bard's Circle, a group to which all past Bards belong. Past Bards will recite original short poems based on this year's theme of DRAGONS. Past Bards are Jan Crowther Myers (2017), Dotty Evanson (2018), Cory Webster (2019-2021), and Lamonte John (2022).