

PARRY, JOHN ('Bardd Alaw'; 1776-1851), musician

Name: John Parry
Pseudonym: Bardd Alaw
Date of birth: 1776
Date of death: 1851
Child: John Orlando Parry
Parent: Thomas Parry
Gender: Male
Occupation: musician
Area of activity: Art and Architecture; Music; Performing Arts
Author: Robert David Griffith

Born 18 February 1776 at Denbigh, the son of Thomas Parry, a stonemason from Aberchwiler. His first lessons in music were given him by a dancing master who taught him the clarinet. In 1793 he joined the Denbighshire volunteers' band of which, four years later, he became the conductor.

He settled in London in 1807, began to be in demand at concerts as a player on wind instruments, and started to compose pieces for such concerts. He published songs and other pieces in 1809 and was invited to write music for use in the Vauxhall Gardens; he was afterwards responsible for the music at that resort for many years. He had previously published (in 1804) *The Ancient Britons' Martial Music* and (in 1807) had produced a second series, arranged for piano or harp, flute, and 'cello. He contributed articles on Welsh airs to the *Cambro-Briton*, 1819-22.

In 1820 he was appointed to organize the music side of the 'eisteddfod Powys,' to be held at Welshpool; it was at this eisteddfod that he was given the name of Bardd Alaw. In 1821 he published a collection of Welsh airs with English words by Felicia Hemans. He published two operas also that year; one of these which ran for twenty-five nights, brought him into prominence as a composer. The Cymmrodorion gave him a 'benefit' eisteddfod (really a concert) 24 May 1826. He was musical adjudicator or conductor at various eisteddfodau - e.g. Brecon, 1822-6; Beaumaris, 1832; Cardiff, 1834; Abergavenny, 1836-48. In 1820 he founded 'Cymdeithas y Canorion' with the object of encouraging singing to the accompaniment of the harp. For many years he edited the hymn-tunes published in *Seren Gomer*.

He died 8 April 1851. He was a member (and president in 1819) of the Gwyneddigion society, and 'Registrar of Music' in the second Cymmrodorion society.

JOHN ORLANDO PARRY (1810 - 1879), musician, actor and entertainer

John Parry's son was born 3 January 1810 in London. He was taught the harp by Boscha, and when he was 15 appeared in public as a professional harpist. He was also a good pianist, and when he was twenty began to appear as a vocalist (baritone). He was also an artist of some repute. Afterwards he turned to light and entertaining songs. A duet composed by him called 'Flow gently, Deva' became very popular in Wales. In 1840 he composed a light opera called 'Wanted, a Governess'; he was also busy producing numerous songs. He had left the stage in 1842 for the concert-room, and in 1850 he came out as an entertainer. He gave this up in 1853 for health reasons, and became organist of S. Jude's church, Southsea. He joined Thomas German Reed, musician and entertainer, in 1860, but retired in 1869 owing to ill health.

He married, 30 June 1835, Anne, daughter of Henry Combe, surgeon (died 1883). He died 20 February 1879, at East Molesey, Surrey.

For numerous examples of the work of John Orlando Parry as musician, entertainer, and amateur artist, see the details given in *N.L.W. Handlist of MSS.*, i, ii, iii, where NLW MS 4925A , NLW MS 4926C , NLW MS 4927A , NLW MS 4928A , NLW MS 4929A , NLW MS 4930A , NLW MS 4931C , NLW MS 8286E , NLW MS 8287D , NLW MS 8288D , NLW MS 8289D , NLW MS 8290E , NLW MS 8291D , NLW MS 8292C , NLW MS 8293D , and NLW MS 10070C are described.

Author

Robert David Griffith, (1877 - 1958)

Sources

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Y Gwyddoniadur Cymreig (1889-96)

M. O. Jones, *Bywgraffiaeth Cerddorion Cymreig* (1890)

Y Cerddor, January 1890

Y Cymmrodor, 1951, 106, 153-9, 164

information from Mr. F. Wynn Jones, London

Further reading

Edward Jones and John Parry, *The Welsh harper* (London 1838)

Images

H. N. King, John Orlando Parry

Works

William Thomas, *Cyfarfod Y Cymry, 'Yr awen lawen; sef, Casgliad o ganiadau dewisol* (Caerfyrddin 1851), pp.45-46

Additional Links

NLW Archives: John Orlando Parry Manuscripts

NLW Archives: NLW MS 10070C: John Orlando Parry

NLW Archives: NLW MS 17732D: Details of concerts by John Orlando Parry

NLW Archives: NLW MS 17733D: Programmes, posters, etc taken from NLW MS 17732D

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