John Lloyd, Caerwys, to [Thomas Pennant], 27 January 1778

ID: 1385
From: John Lloyd
To: [Thomas Pennant]
Date: 1778-01-27
Repository: National Library of Wales
Identifier: NLW 2594E
Cite: 'John Lloyd, Caerwys, to [Thomas Pennant], 27 January 1778 1778-01-27' in Curious Travellers Digital Editions [editions.curioustravellers.ac.uk/doc/1385]

The Datceiniad, or he that accompanied any ^Datceiniad musical Instrument with his voice, tho he was inferior to both Bard & musician, yet he must be possessd. of a Considerable degree of Knowledge of both the Sciences, he must be able to Tune the Harp & Crwth,[1] to understand the Gamut, to shew his skill in playing several notes & Keys, & be perfectly conversant, in that they calld,, the 24 measures of Instrumental song, & be able to sing with Judgment, Melody & propriety. – He must likewise be master of reading welsh Justly & writing it Correctly, to ^& he must not only understand the 24 common modes of Mertrical Compositions, but exibit sppecimens of his own at least in three of them. – If he met with any o[...]lyld song faultily transcribed, he was required to be able to rectify it. – He was further required not only to be a handy waiter at Table, but an expert Carver of every Species of Fowl. – In the Weddings of any of the Royal Family, his office was to wait at the Table of the Bride +^Datceiniad Pen pastwn[1] The most inferior of the musical Tribe was the Datceiniad Pen Pastwn, or he that sung to the Harmony of his club or staff, having no skill in any other musical Instrument; when this Gentleman was suffered to be introduced, he was obliged to stand in the middle of the Hall & sing his Cywydd[3] or Owdl,[4] beating time & playing the Symphony with his Pastwn.[5] But if there was a Professor of Music present, his leave must be first obtain,[d] before he presumed to entertain the Company with this Species of Melody. Wherever he came he must act as a menial Servant to the Bard or Musician.

[...]Notwithstanding our Eisteddfods held by Royal Authority have long since ceas'd,[6] yet our Bards have at all times & do still hold such Congresses, tho' they don't confer degrees as formerly, save in [...]one case, where the Victor is chaired. The Modern Eisteddfod, generally consists of a Contest for Superiority between the Bards of two different districts, as of two Counties &c They meet at a particular place previously agreed upon, sometimes ^generally at a publick house, & sometimes sub dio.[7] A Judge is always appointed who decides upon the merit of the performers, and proclaims the Victor who is always chaired upon the occasion, & always afterwards held in estimation as a Bard. I have frequently seen[...] poems composed at some of these Eisteddfods, they were upon different ^given Subjects, upon each of which, [...]every Cadidate must deliver [...]his composition. The Sujects are generally given by the Judge.

As to the Datceiniaid or Vocal Performers, tho' not at present tied by the Ancient Regulations, yet they are very numerous & very excellent in their way, particularly in the Counties of Meirionydd Caernarvon, Anglesey & Denbigh. It forms a great part of their Amusements at Festivals, wakes Fairs, Weddings, Dancings & all opportunities of Festivity. Both Sexes equally excel in it. They often ^meet entirely for that purpose, but it oftner takes place at the Conclusion or middle of a Dance, when the parties are disposed to a little Rest. Here they all sit down and the Musician plays any tune at his option, especially if it becomes a matter of Contest, for then no person is allow,[d] to call for a Tune. One begins & sings the Tune once Through, when he has done the next to him takes it ^up & so on till the whole of the Singers have Sung over it once, Sometimes the Same tune is Continued for Several Rounds, especially if the Company is small. Whenever & how often soever the T[...]une is changed the ^same rotation is observ[d] & every one sings in his Turn, unless, as often Happens, some of ^the less skilful are flung out, when a Tune is played that they are not acquainted with. – Some veteran proficients will hold out for whole nights together, without scarce every Singing the same Stanza or Same Tune twice over. Their excellency Consists as well in the Harmony of their

Voices, as in the great variety of Tunes & Stanzas they can Sing. Some Hundreds of the latter, of different lengths & metres are Treasured up in their memories, which they daily sing whilst attending their flocks, or ^are occupied in any other rural employment. In winter nights every house in those Countries affords a Concert of vocal music. – As these Pennylls or Stanzas admit of great variety in length & Structure, not a one of our Tunes can be played, but a Skilful Singer can adapt numbers of his Stock of Pennylls to it, at pleasure. – These Stanzas are detached pieces upon ^all the variety of Subjects, some Grave ~~some~~ some Serious, some adapted to Venus some to Bacchus &c &c many of these sung to this day are suppos,[d] as old as the Times of the Druids, others have been composed in every age since, - no wonder therefore that we are so rich in old ^stock besides numbers that are continually Compos[d] upon some Occasion or other, ^all these Pennylls they generally learn from one another without being scarce ever Committed to paper. A singer that is well Stocked is sure to sing one a propos to that sung before. – They often likewise adapt part of a Cywydd or any other song to the Tune – In a Singing Contest between two Counties held some years ago in Gwedir Park, A woman appeared there who Sung variety of verses to 140 different Tunes.

I beg leave further to add that you had better leave this Subject alone till you come to Meirionydd or Caernavonshire or some musical Country, especially as your present volume will be large enought without it. – As to our Interludes I think they may as well be dropped for the present for the same reason, You may in some of your next excursions attend the representation of one, then your account will come in a propos[8]

My back is very Stiff & the day cold, otherwise I should have waited of you ~~today~~

My best respects to M[rs] & Miss Pennant

Your very Humble Ser[t] &c

John Lloyd
Caerwys
Jan[y]. 27: 1778 –

Marginalia

Endorsement in Thomas Pennant's hand:
Datceiniad

Editorial Notes

[1] 'crowd'.

[2] 'crowd'.

[3] A strict-metre poem consisting of rhyming couplets.

[4] 'ode'.

[5] 'staff'.

[6] Lloyd refers to the eisteddfodau held at Caerwys in 1523 and 1567. See Hywel Teifi Edwards, *The Eisteddfod* (Cardiff, 1990), pp. 4–10.

[7] 'in the open air, under the open sky'.

[8] Pennant used this material in *A tour in Wales 1770 [1773]* (1778), I, pp. 445–6. See R. Paul Evans, 'Reverend John Lloyd of Caerwys (1733–93)', *Flintshire Historical Society Journal*, 31 (1983/4), 109–124, esp.

118. For a discussion of this episode as a classic example of layering material and of John Lloyd's influence on Pennant, see Mary-Ann Constantine, ' "To trace the country's glories to their source": Dangerous History in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Wales*', in Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (eds.), *Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770–1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 121–143, esp. pp. 136–7.

Authorial Notes

[1] +He was also to carry about him a Harp or Crwth[2] covered with a White Case.