

Apollo's Cabinet
CD Recording: "Musical Wanderlust - Charles Burney's European Travels"
Project Report

In 2022 and 2023, Apollo's Cabinet embarked on a new project inspired by Charles Burney's 18th century travel diaries, which entailed the recording of their debut album, research into the musical landscape of 18th century Europe and Charles Burney's own compositions, a video series, as well as concerts in the UK and Europe.

With the support of a grant from Angel Early Music, we were able to produce a CD that not only included Baroque music, but also narration of Burney's original diary entries by Alexander Armstrong (BBC "Pointless", Classic FM) in English and Juergen Maurer (BBC "Vienna Blood", ORF "Vorstadtweiber") in German. We also managed to record a video series for each separately released single and have been overwhelmed by the positive reception of our audiences, promoters as well as the numbers of listeners on streaming platforms. The videos can be watched on our youtube channel and a new video is released every 2 weeks:

www.youtube.com/@apolloscabinet



About the Disc:

Charles Burney, born April 7, 1726 in Shropshire and died April 12, 1814 in Chelsea, was an organist, composer, and the foremost music historian of his time in England.

After studying the violin and organ as a boy, when he turned 18 years old, he started a musical apprenticeship with composer Thomas Arne at Drury Lane theatre in London where he later collaborated with playwright and director David Garrick.

He married twice and had eight children, one of them being novelist Frances Burney and another explorer James Burney who travelled with Captain Cook.

During his life he worked as a music teacher, performer and composer before dedicating the majority of his time and efforts to music history. In recognition of these historical contributions, he was appointed a fellow of the Royal Society and received a DMus from Oxford University.

Until 1776, no written history of music existed in the English language. To equip himself to fill this gap, Burney set off on two long journeys in 1770 and 1772, to Italy, France, Germany, Bohemia (Czechia), Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. He investigated libraries and archives, spoke to personalities in the musical world, attended musical events, and subsequently published accounts of both tours.

This album presents a kaleidoscope of European music from the 17th and 18th centuries from every country Burney visited during his two journeys. Inspired by Burney's exploratory

and individual spirit, we have continued his thoughts and added our own “marks of originality and novelty” to the pieces of music.

Excerpts have been selected from his diaries to illustrate the locations he visited. These have been edited only slightly, to aid a modern reader’s understanding or to be concise enough to fit on this album. The full text is well worth reading, very entertaining and can be found in his two travel diaries: ‘The present state of music in France and Italy’ (part 1) and ‘The present state of music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces’ (part 2), or, ‘the journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music’.

Recording process:

In February 2023 we rehearsed first at Holy Trinity Kensington and then recorded at Plumstead church a week later. For this, we were joined by our guest musician Sophia Prodanova, who regularly performs with ensembles like Arcangelo and Pygmalion and we felt extremely lucky to be able to work together with her. Our sound engineer was John Croft and our producer Emily Baines, both from Chiaro Audio. We thoroughly enjoyed working with them and have decided to continue our collaboration for our next recording project. The physical album was released in December 2023 and the digital release will be in March 2024. Since its release, the CD has been picked up by The Guardian for review, who called it: *“An engaging travelogue (...) dispatched with plenty of freewheeling spirit”*

Notable Performances of this programme:

:alpenarte festival, Austria	October 2022
The Georgian Concert Society, Edinburgh	March 2023
AMUZ Antwerpen, Belgium	August 2023
Utrecht OudeMuziek Festival, Netherlands	August 2023
Semana de Musica Antigua, Estella, Spain	September 2023
Montafoner Resonanzen, Austria	September 2023
Charles Burney Festival, King’s Lynn	October 2023
Handel House, London, Album Launch	December 2023
Westminster Reference Library, Panel	December 2023

We have thoroughly enjoyed bringing this programme to audiences across the UK and Europe and it has been received with great enthusiasm everywhere we went, with plenty of CD purchases to continue listening at home.

The panel event at Westminster reference library deserves a special mention as we were joined by three scholars and members of the Burney Society, who formed part of a panel led by our joint artistic director, Teresa Wrann, and discussed the life of Charles Burney, his musical output and travel across Europe. The event was held in Westminster Library, where Charles Burney’s house used to be. This was hugely successful and the connections made have opened up further collaboration and expanded our network.

We also have several performances of this programme planned for early 2024, a highlight being a performance at the Konzerthaus Vienna in January, so the grant has really enabled far more than the CD itself. It has given us the opportunity to record our debut album (a real milestone for every young ensemble), really work on some of the repertoire and shape how our music sounds and what we want to focus on in terms of programming and recording - lots of fresh and creative arrangements, some world premiere recordings and reconstructions of partially lost/unavailable music which has plenty of research put into. It also allowed us to seek performances of this programme and has given us the possibility to offer promoters a credible product that represents us and what we do to its full extent. We are hugely grateful for the support!

Teresa Wrann, Co-Artistic director
Apollo’s Cabinet