

## **Spiritato – Report on *The Taste of the Nation*; recording and performance project, February 2020**

In February 2020, Spiritato gave two performances of our latest programme; *The Taste of the Nation*. Alongside the project, members of the group gave masterclasses at Wiltshire Music Centre and the Royal Academy of Music. In addition to the live performances, we recorded the programme, for release by Delphian Records - our debut for this award-winning label.

The project focuses on music composed 'after the Italian manner' by musicians working in London in the early 1700s. Contemporaries of Handel, William Corbett, JC Pepusch and Obadiah Shuttleworth all contributed greatly to the fashion for Italian music at the time, writing virtuosic concertos and cantatas that have been lost to history, until now.

We began rehearsals for the project on 13<sup>th</sup> February. Our group specializes in bringing back forgotten music and this project was no exception. Whilst the programme was bookended by well-known works by Handel and Geminiani, the core of the repertoire had not been performed since the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

We were joined by mezzo-soprano Ciara Hendrick for four cantatas by JC Pepusch, taken from sets published in 1710 and 1720. These cantatas are a real find and more than justify the effort and time spent researching and creating the editions. To balance the programme we included two concerti grossi by Shuttleworth – arrangements of Corelli's sonatas and the composer's only extant works. The programme was brought together by three works by William Corbett, a musician at the forefront of Italian fashion in London – leading the orchestra at the Haymarket Theatre and travelling extensively throughout Italy.

With the exception of the Handel and Geminiani, for which we used facsimiles of the original publications, we produced our own editions of the other nine pieces in the programme, all from original sources found in the British Library. Fortunately, we had plenty of time in the run up to the recording to check and amend these new editions and refine our musical intentions in advantage of the valuable session time.

The performances took place at Wiltshire Music Centre, Bradford on Avon (15<sup>th</sup> February) and Chichester Assembly Rooms (27<sup>th</sup> February). We had performed on previous occasions at both these venues. Wiltshire Music in particular, is a key venue for us, having supported us from an early stage in our development. We have been returning to WMC for several years and each time building our audience there. We look forward to doing so again in the future.

Both performances went very well and as a result, we are now looking to promote this programme to other venues and festivals in 2021 and beyond. Performing new repertoire is always a gamble but the audience response was extremely positive at both venues. Whilst storm Denis may have reduced our audience numbers in Wiltshire, the concert in Chichester was sold out.

Between these two concerts, we made the world-premiere recording of eight works from the programme (a further, ninth piece on the disc, has already been recorded but worked very well within our programme). The sessions took place from 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> February at All Hallows, Gospel Oak in London. We had originally planned to record at Wiltshire Music Centre, but the additional cost of accommodation, combined with slightly reduced availability for our chosen dates, meant that a move to a London venue, where the orchestra is based, was a better decision in the long run.

Despite some noise from a building site near by on the first day of recording, we had a great three days working with Paul Baxter from Delphian. In fact, we were able to finish the last session an hour early. Ciara Hendrick was particularly impressive for her dramatic characterization of the cantatas. We worked with Ciara on our 2014 recording of *The Judgment of Paris* and as far as we were concerned, she was our first choice for the project. She was a pleasure to work with. The recorded material has been passed on

for editing, and at time of writing we are awaiting the first edit of the disc. We expect a release date around October 2020.

This project has been a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of our group and attract long-term, strategic support from private individuals – our Friends and Patrons scheme was launched alongside the project and has already been of benefit to our future fundraising ambitions. Once the disc is released, we hope to secure broadcast opportunities and press-coverage, both extremely useful in promoting the future work of the group and widening our audiences.

It has been especially encouraging to note the enthusiastic response from audiences to the newly discovered works. This is a great spur to continue our work and challenge the perception that everything worth hearing has been found already. Throughout the project and at the two concerts, we invited support from members of the public, of whom many donated towards the costs involved in making the recording. In return, and in the spirit of Baroque patronage, these sponsors will be listed in both the CD booklet and in a specially prepared edition of the cantatas.

The project has been our first as a registered Charity and we have been delighted by the generosity of our supporting Trusts and Foundations. Without the support of the Bishopsdown Trust, Golsoncott Foundation, Musical Reprieval Trust, Gemma Classical Music Trust and Angel Early Music, The Taste of the Nation would not have been possible. We are incredibly grateful for the support of these organisations and thanks to them, we have been able to bring some wonderful, forgotten music back to life.

Spiritato, March 2020

**Programme** (works marked \* were performed but not recorded)

GF Handel: Concerto Grosso in D Major Op. 6, No. 5  
JC Pepusch: Cantata – *Kindly Fate at length release me*  
W Corbett: *Alla Bolognese* from *Le Bizzarie Universali*  
JC Pepusch: Cantata – *The Spring*  
O Shuttleworth: Concerto Grosso No. XI  
INTERVAL  
O Shuttleworth: Concerto Grosso No. I  
JC Pepusch: Cantata – *Chloe*  
W Corbett: *Al' Inglese* from *Le Bizzarie Universali*  
JC Pepusch: Cantata – *While Pale Britannia pensive sate*  
F Geminiani: Variations on La Folia\*