

ARTICLES

THE PACIFIC IN THE MINDS AND MUSIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the significance of musical, cultural and scientific discoveries in the South Seas to European scholars in the second half of the eighteenth century, but in particular to the emerging clique of music historians in England and France. It examines the relationship between Charles Burney and many leading figures in maritime exploration, and the notable interest he took in the discovery and codification of South Sea music. The writing of Dr Burney on this subject is considered, as is his contact with Omai (Mai), a young Tahitian brought to England. Through the examination of correspondence, memoirs and other sources the article also discusses the exposure of ‘noble savages’ Omai and Aotourou to French and Italian music in London and Paris, and the use of their reactions to fuel the controversy between the supporters of these respective styles in late eighteenth-century Europe. Lastly, it briefly mentions a number of eighteenth-century musical works that used the Pacific as their central theme and examines artwork that complemented the concepts of geographical exploration with the musical exploration of Dr Burney.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the Pacific Ocean was Europe’s ultimate frontier for maritime exploration and scientific advancement. Britain and France were particularly prominent in sponsoring voyages of discovery, the importance of which was recognized by other nations in according them a certain degree of neutrality. The publication of accounts of the voyages brought to Enlightenment Europe an image of a prelapsarian island paradise well suited to fuelling contemporary philosophical discourses on social inequality and primitivism, while the exploits of some explorers were fêted in music and drama. Regular contact and colonial ambitions in the nineteenth century eventually brought a change to the European outlook, however, just as the increased accuracy of navigation and cartography decreased the legendary status of the island nations. Nevertheless, as a distant part of the globe to which relatively few Europeans travelled, the Pacific presented a considerable attraction to the Western scholar, scientist and musician in the second half of the eighteenth century, as it was considered to contain rare vestiges of natural human life uncorrupted by the decadence of contemporary civilization. Such thoughts spurred on efforts to study the culture of the ‘noble savage’, and to make comparisons with aspects of ancient Greece. These scholarly undertakings relied almost totally on voyaging accounts, which by their nature were prone to exaggeration or exclusion of information, although there was also the possibility of personal interviews with European eyewitnesses and direct contact with several ‘noble savages’ in Europe itself. Pacific cultures occupied the attention of leading minds in England and France for several decades.

This article aims to demonstrate the significance of South Sea discoveries and observations – both scientific and cultural – to European scholars in the second half of the eighteenth century, but in particular



to the emerging clique of music historians in England and France. It will consider the relationship between Charles Burney and many leading figures in maritime exploration, and the notable interest shown by Dr Burney¹ in the discovery and codification of South Sea music. Through the examination of correspondence, memoirs and other sources it will also explore the exposure of ‘noble savages’ to French and Italian music in London and Paris, and the use of their reactions to fuel the controversy between the supporters of these respective styles in late eighteenth-century Europe. Lastly, it will briefly mention a number of eighteenth-century musical works that used the Pacific as their central theme.

THE ANGLO-FRENCH ASCENDANCY IN THE PACIFIC

The Pacific Ocean, since its naming as such by Fernão de Magalhães (Ferdinand Magellan), a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain, had long been considered the domain of the Spanish crown.² The annexation of the Philippine Islands in 1565, together with the two lines of demarcation established by the Treaties of Tordesillas (1494) and Zaragoza (1529), had entrenched the Spanish claim to this particular hemisphere. Although constantly disturbed by the piratical incursions of ‘heretical’ nations, the trans-Pacific galleon trade from Manila to Acapulco prospered for some 250 years (1565–1815), making it the ‘longest and most successful sea commerce in human history’.³ Yet with the end of the Seven Years War – during which British forces had occupied Manila for almost two years – the governments of Britain and France began to realize the potential of the Pacific as a locus for scientific and cultural advancement. ‘During the late eighteenth century’, writes Anthony Pagden, ‘an astonishing number of voyages of exploration left from various parts of Europe, few if any of which had obvious colonizing intentions . . . All these expeditions carried botanists, engineers, hydrographers, physicists, physicians, astronomers and painters, but very few soldiers and no missionaries.’⁴ Of these voyages, the most renowned were undoubtedly those led by the navigators Louis Antoine de Bougainville and James Cook. They not only made enormous contributions to scientific and geographical knowledge, but through their discovery of peoples previously unknown to Europeans they also publicized what was thought to be a cultural example of ‘the whole of humankind in its infancy’.⁵

Both Bougainville and Cook had been sent to the South Seas with instructions to observe the transit of Venus across the sun. While they can be considered to have made major contributions to astronomical and navigational science, the subsequent publication of their heroic, erotic and exotic accounts attracted far more public attention. In particular, they made the island of Tahiti (called ‘Otaheite’ by English writers) famous throughout Europe. In the popular imagination of English and French literary audiences the ‘South Sea Islands’ were considered to be one geographical and cultural entity. For eighteenth-century Europe the term ‘South Seas’ thus remained a loose reference to a large number of distant islands in the Pacific, including the ‘Society Islands’ (now French Polynesia, which includes Tahiti), the ‘Friendly Islands’ (Tonga), the ‘Sandwich Islands’ (Hawaii) and New Zealand, in spite of the publication of detailed maps and voyage accounts which described their distinct languages and cultures.

1 In order to avoid confusion between Dr Charles Burney and his son James Burney, this article will refer to the former as Dr Burney wherever necessary.

2 Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and Empires: Europeans and the Rest of the World, from Antiquity to the Present* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), 125.

3 William John Summers, ‘Listening for Historic Manila: Music and Rejoicing in an International City’, *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 2/1 (1998), 205.

4 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 131–132.

5 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 123.



OLD BURNEY AND THE SEA

In 1760, not long after he moved his family from King's Lynn to London, Dr Burney sent his eldest son James, 'a bright and intelligent boy, full of high spirits and with a keen sense of humour', to sea.⁶ Aged only ten, James was apprenticed as 'Captain's Servant' to Captain Montagu of the *Princess Amelia*, which narrowly escaped destruction by French fireships in the Bay of Biscay at the end of 1761.⁷ Burney possibly wished for his son to be engaged in the great enterprise of maritime adventure and exploration; James may also have been enamoured of this prospect. Although his first wartime experiences must have been harrowing, when he was discharged from his first period of service on 18 September 1762 – at the age of twelve – he was not deterred from following a career at sea, his captain writing to Burney to praise the ability and enthusiasm of the boy.⁸ Over the following years he served in many successful voyages, and was rated 'Able Seaman' in 1769.⁹ He participated in a voyage to India on the *Greenwich*, and while it was a professional success, he failed to sell the private merchandise he took with him. Returning home in June 1771, he found that his father had been honoured with an Oxford doctorate and had just published his successful account of *The Present State of Music in France and Italy*.¹⁰

In the same year the famous navigator Captain James Cook returned in triumph from his first voyage of exploration. He was to make two further expeditions to the Pacific before finally meeting his much publicized death in Hawaii in 1779. Between the first and second voyages of Cook there were a number of developments in the study and understanding of South Seas cultures based on the reports of naturalists and botanists, and of Cook himself. Their observations sought not only to confirm or disprove previous claims made by Captains Wallis and Bougainville but also to prepare the way for future scientific research. From his first voyage Cook also brought to England a comprehensive collection of Oceanic artefacts, including a number of musical instruments, among which featured the Tahitian nose flute and various Maori aerophones. This collection was presented to John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich, who was then the first Lord of the Admiralty in Lord North's Ministry of 1770–1782.¹¹ Lord Sandwich (as he was commonly known) in turn gave it to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1771; today it is housed in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge.¹²

Burney was aware of these instruments and took an active interest in musical discoveries made by European voyagers in the distant South Seas. In the first volume of his *General History of Music* he compares the 'New-Zealand trumpet' to an Abyssinian trumpet while discussing the history of ancient Egyptian music. His observations suggest that a detailed examination of the Maori instrument took place in England: 'The New-Zealand trumpet, though extremely sonorous, is likewise monotonous, when it is blown by the natives, though it is capable of as great a variety of tones as an European trumpet.'¹³ Musicians in eighteenth-century Europe were certainly aware of ethnic instruments brought back from exploratory voyages as trophies or diplomatic gifts, the composer William Shield (1748–1829) going so far as to include Tahitian percussion instruments in his pantomime *Omai: Or, A Trip Round the World* (1785), the central character of which will

6 G. E. Manwaring, *My Friend the Admiral: The Life, Letters, and Journals of Rear-Admiral James Burney, F. R. S., the Companion of Captain Cook and Friend of Charles Lamb* (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1931), 4.

7 Percy Alfred Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney: His Life, His Travels, His Works, His Family, and His Friends* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), volume 1, 102.

8 Manwaring, *My Friend the Admiral*, 5.

9 Manwaring, *My Friend the Admiral*, 7.

10 Manwaring, *My Friend the Admiral*, 9–11.

11 The enduring worldwide legacy of this aristocrat is, without a doubt, that culinary invention of inexhaustible delight and variety.

12 Wilfred Shawcross, 'The Cambridge University Collection of Maori Artefacts, Made on Captain Cook's First Voyage', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 79/3 (1970), 305.

13 Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To which is prefixed, A Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients* (London: author, 1776–1789), volume 1, 216.



be discussed later.¹⁴ Following the return of Cook to England in 1771, Burney made the acquaintance of the navigator, thereby bolstering the naval career of his son James. At this time Burney was himself between his own two famous voyages of musical discovery, made in 1770 and 1772 respectively. Burney met Cook in 1771 through his association with Lord Sandwich, and with the latter's influence made the acquaintance of many men prominent in geographical exploration and natural sciences, including the naturalists Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Carl Solander. With the second voyage of discovery in its planning stages, Dr Burney 'made interest with Sandwich and Cook to have his son James taken into the company'.¹⁵ This was arranged, and after James Burney passed the examination at the Navy Office in January 1772, he obtained his certificate of proficiency as a sea officer, though he had yet to receive his commission as such. He would set out on the *Resolution*, commanded by Cook himself.¹⁶

Before embarking on his second voyage, however, Cook called on Burney at Queen Square, an occasion recorded by Burney and reproduced by his daughter Fanny in her *Memoirs*:

In February, I had the honour of receiving the illustrious Captain Cooke to dine with me in Queen-square, previously to his second voyage round the world.

Observing upon a table Bougainville's *Voyage autour du Monde*, he turned it over, and made some curious remarks on the illiberal conduct of that circumnavigator towards himself, when they met, and crossed each other; which made me desirous to know, in examining the chart of M. de Bougainville, the several tracks of the two navigators; and exactly where they had crossed or approached each other.

Captain Cooke instantly took a pencil from his pocket-book, and said he would trace the route; which he did in so clear and scientific a manner, that I would not take fifty pounds for the book. The pencil marks having been fixed by skim milk, will always be visible.¹⁷

Cook embarked on his second voyage on 13 July 1772 in the *Resolution*.¹⁸ By November that year, during the voyage itself, James Burney was promoted to Second Lieutenant and transferred to the accompanying ship, the *Adventure*, which was under the command of Captain Tobias Furneaux.¹⁹

Having published in May 1771 his account of a musical tour through France and Italy, Dr Burney undertook another voyage in 1772, which resulted in the publication of *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Provinces* the following year. An anecdote concerning a South Sea Islander in the latter work, to be considered below, shows that he was already beginning to take an interest in the musical traditions of what he would have considered the global periphery. In 1774, the year in which Captain Tobias Furneaux returned safely from the Pacific on the *Adventure*, the ship that bore both Lieutenant James Burney and the Tahitian man known as Omai,²⁰ a publication appeared entitled *Epistle from Oberea, Queen of Otaheite, to Joseph Banks, Esq.*, which made mention of the nose flute and of Tahitian music in general:

14 Robert H. B. Hoskins, 'The Theatre Music of William Shield', *Studies in Music* [Perth, Australia] 21 (1987), 92.

15 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 193.

16 Manwaring, *My Friend the Admiral*, 14; Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 193.

17 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 193–194; Fanny [Frances] Burney d'Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney, Arranged from His Own Manuscripts, from Family Papers, and from Personal Recollections* (New York: AMS Press, 1975), volume 1, 270. The copy of *Voyage autour du monde* by Louis Antoine de Bougainville (Paris, 1771) owned by Dr. Burney is currently housed in the Rare Books collection of the British Library, shelfmark C.28.L.10. The pencil marks made by Captain Cook on the chart (page 19) have been well preserved.

18 Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas* (London: Penguin, 2004), 174.

19 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 193.

20 In the Tahitian language the prefix 'O' signified 'it is'; thus the first English visitors to Tahiti called the island 'Otaheite', one of its queens, Porea, they called 'Oberea', and the man Mai, 'Omai'. While this study will make use of the correct term 'Tahiti', it will defer to the eighteenth-century nomenclature of 'Omai' or 'Omiah', as this is how Mai was called in England and, indeed, 'Omai' is the name he came to call himself there.



It appears that music is cultivated in Otaheite to no small degree of perfection. Indeed this method of blowing the flute with the nostrils is admirably calculated for the *cromatic*. We have heard, with great pleasure, that the ingenious Dr. Burney intends to take a voyage to the South Sea to inform himself, and afterwards to give some account to the public, of the state of music in those parts.²¹

While the news of these travel plans – albeit unaccomplished – may excite the modern music historian, the romance is somewhat dispelled by the revelation on the title page that the translator of this (rather licentious²²) epistle was none other than ‘T. Q. Z., Esq., Professor of the Otaheite language in Dublin, and of all the Languages of the undiscovered Islands in the South Seas’. The recent publication of Burney’s musical tours probably contributed to the musicological connection being made by ‘T. Q. Z.’, alias John Scott. Such satire, however, suggests a certain appreciation for endeavours in music history, however, as well as highlighting the general excitement that probably existed amongst the reading public on the reports of a prelapsarian culture and, to some extent, its music. The 1773 publication of a single account by Dr John Hawkesworth of voyages to the Pacific (successively undertaken by Byron, Wallis, Carteret and Cook) had served to make Oberea, ‘Queen of Otaheite’, a household name,²³ and it was Burney himself who had suggested his friend Hawkesworth for the job, as the literary skills of Cook were not so refined.²⁴ It seems likely that Burney, the musician and scholar, was firmly connected in the public eye with the leading figures of maritime exploration. In the subsequent explosion of published accounts treating the voyages of discovery in the Pacific, it would be Burney who would be expected to comment most judiciously on the music of the islanders.

THE NEW CYTHERA

A number of observations made by Banks, Bougainville and Cook served to highlight similarities between the appearance and culture of South Sea Islanders and the Ancient Greeks. In his *Voyage autour du monde* Bougainville made an early comparison of Tahitian and ancient Greek musics and described Tahitian reactions to European music:

Cet homme alors se pencha vers nous et, d’un air tendre, aux accords d’une flûte dans laquelle un autre Indien soufflait avec le nez, il nous chanta lentement une chanson, sans doute anacréontique . . . Quatre insulaires vinrent avec confiance souper et coucher à bord. Nous leur fîmes entendre flûte, basse, violon, et nous leur donnâmes un feu d’artifice composé de fusées et de serpentaux. Ce spectacle leur causa une surprise mêlée d’effroi.²⁵

He then leaned towards us, and with a tender air he slowly sung a song, without doubt of the Anacreontic kind, to the tune of a flute, which another Indian blew with his nose . . . Four islanders came with great confidence to sup and lye on board. We let them hear the music of our flutes,

21 Major (John) Scott, *An Epistle from Oberea, Queen of Otaheite, to Joseph Banks, Esq. Translated by T. Q. Z. Esq. professor of the Otaheite language in Dublin, and of all the Languages of the undiscovered Islands in the SOUTH SEAS; And enriched with HISTORICAL and EXPLANATORY NOTES* (London, 1774), 13–14. The Foreword to this publication is dated 20 September 1773.

22 On page 6 of the ‘translation’ of T. Q. Z. Queen Oberea posits the following question to Banks: ‘Who led thee through the woods impervious shade, / Pierc’d the thick covert, and explor’d the glade?’

23 It appears that the English reading public identified Oberea with as much fondness as they might have any other reigning monarch in Europe. In her journal of 1775 Fanny Burney recounts a conversation during which Oberea was jovially suggested as a wife for her brother James. “‘Poor Oberea”, said [Fanny], “[James] says is dethroned.” “But”, said [Mr Bruce] archly, “if *Mr Banks* goes, he will reinstate her!”” Fanny Burney and Lars E. Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), volume 2, 92.

24 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 194.

25 Louis Antoine de Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde par la fregate du roi La Boudeuse, et la flûte l’Étoile: en 1766, 1767, 1768 & 1769*, second, augmented, edition (Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1772), volume 2, 37.



base-voils, and violins, and we entertained them with a fire-work of sky-rockets and fire-snakes. This sight caused a mixture of surprize and of horror in them.²⁶

Bougainville was so struck by the similarity of Tahiti to his own ideal of ancient Greece that he named the island *La Nouvelle Cythère* (The New Cythera), after the island in the Peloponnese on which Venus had her birth.²⁷ Physical appearance was considered one of the most obvious links with the ancients. Bougainville noted the beauty of the Tahitian women whose ‘*contour* [had] not been disfigured by a torture of fifteen years [*sic*] duration’ (corsets)²⁸ and Banks, who had nowhere seen ‘such Elegant women as those of Otaheite’, later compared them to ‘the Grecians . . . from whose model the Venus of the Medicis was copied’.²⁹ It should be noted, however, that the warm reception of Bougainville by the Tahitians was subsequent to the first European visit to Tahiti by Samuel Wallis in *HMS Dolphin* the previous year, during which a brief skirmish had established the strength of European firepower, resulting in the forging of peaceful relations between European ships and the Tahitian inhabitants. The initial French reaction to the welcome of the islanders was thus markedly different from that of the English.

Johann Reinhold Forster, a naturalist who accompanied Cook on his second voyage, wrote that ‘the civilized Greeks were Musicians, & had a Flute of several Pipes of reed, which we found again in the Isles of *Middelburg & Amsterdam*. The tunes of *Otahaitee* & its neighbourhood are only a variation of 3 notes, the *New Zealanders* had 5 notes according [to] the observation of M^r [James] Burney’.³⁰ In his published *Observations*, Forster noted that ‘the VERSES of the Taheiteans are always delivered by singing, in the true antient Greek style’, and that these verses were ‘regularly divided into feet’.³¹ In a recent article on ‘encounter music’ Vanessa Agnew has identified a significant number of other occasions when British seamen compared the music of the South Seas with that of the ancient Greeks.³² A remarkable discovery, as she indicates, was the existence of harmony in the music of New Zealand and Tonga. James Burney wrote of the latter country that ‘they sing slow and ended with the minor Chord[;] it put me in mind of the Church Singing among the Roman Catholics – instruments, Flutes (Nosy) and Reed Organs’.³³ He also transcribed some of their melodies. Of Maori songs, he wrote that ‘there is no great variety in the Music, however it comes nearer to a Tune than anything I have heard here – the words I neither understood nor can remember . . . they keep singing the 2 first Bars till their words are expended & then close with the last – Sometimes they Sing an underpart which is a third lower except the 2 last notes which are the same’.³⁴ Surprisingly, the music of Tahiti occasioned no more mention than a comment that it ‘is less worth Notice than at Zealand, so I shall say nothing more on that score’.³⁵ Apparently the existence of harmony was the measure by which James Burney determined the worth or sophistication of the respective musics of the islands.

26 Louis Antoine de Bougainville, *A Voyage round the World. Performed by Order of His Most Christian Majesty, In the Years 1766, 1767, 1768, and 1769*, trans. Johann Reinhold Forster (London: J. Nourse and T. Davies, 1772), 223.

27 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 122.

28 Bougainville, *A Voyage round the World*, 251.

29 Sir Joseph Banks, *Thoughts on the manners of [the women of] Otaheite, written in Holland for the amusement of the Princess of Orange*, Correspondence and Papers of Sir Joseph Banks, National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 9, Item 4–4e.

30 Johann Reinhold Forster, *The Resolution Journal of Johann Reinhold Forster, 1772–1775* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1982), volume 3, 396.

31 Johann Reinhold Forster and Nicholas Thomas, *Observations Made during a Voyage round the World* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 286.

32 Vanessa Agnew, ‘A Scots Orpheus in the South Seas, Or, Encounter Music on Cook’s Second Voyage’, *Journal for Maritime Research* (May 2001), online journal, available at <<http://www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk>>.

33 James Burney and Beverley Hooper, *With Captain James Cook in the Antarctic and Pacific: The Private Journal of James Burney, Second Lieutenant of the ‘Adventure’ on Cook’s Second Voyage, 1772–1773* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1975), 84.

34 Burney and Hooper, *With Captain James Cook*, 56–57.

35 Burney and Hooper, *With Captain James Cook*, 78.



The discovery of harmony among the music of the Tongans and Maoris made comparisons with the ancient Greeks problematic, as the ancient Greeks were believed not to have had harmony. According to Agnew, this circumstance ‘complicated theories about civilisation and progress. If the ancient Greeks were thought to embody the infancy of civilisation transposed to the South Seas, what would it mean for Europeans if the Tongans and Maori demonstrated a greater level of sophistication?’. It appears, however, that music bearing a higher level of similarity to the Western diatonic scale was considered more advanced. ‘The Tongans were praised for having a wider tonal range than the Maori, whose pentatonic scale was seen as impoverished, while the Tahitians, whose three-note scale hardly constituted music at all, were thought to verge on the musically barbaric.’³⁶ In a review of *Voyage round the World* (1777) by George Forster, the naturalist who accompanied Cook on his second voyage, the author ‘B.’³⁷ writes that ‘it may seem strange that *harmony*, or music in parts, which is now generally acknowledged not to have been known even to the ingenious and refined Greeks, should be found in familiar use with certain barbarians, secluded from the rest of the world in the bosom of the Southern Ocean’.³⁸ Giving an example originally transcribed by James Burney and reproduced by George Forster (see Figure 1) to ‘[put] the matter out of doubt’, he continues, ‘it is true, the New Zealand *counterpoint* consists only of a regular succession of major and minor thirds intermixed: but even this appears a high refinement in the musical art, when we consider it as the production of a set of hungry and miserable *cannibals*’. In the last of the examples he quotes, a Maori dirge on the death of the Tahitian man Tupaia, B. considers there to be ‘really pathos and expression’ (Figure 2).³⁹ B. writes of the *glissando* indicated between the last two notes that

connoisseurs may perhaps differ with respect to the *grace* which our *Antarctic* composers have thought meet to adopt in the two final notes of Tupaya’s *requiem*; and may think it rather *too moving*, and as being likely to produce emotions very different from those that attend the sorrowful passions. It is however a grace, or musical refinement; and but very lately introduced even into our island: though *Madame Sirmen*, we believe, never attempted the execution of it on the very amplified scale of the New Zealand *Connoscenti*.⁴⁰

He compares its sound to that ‘produced by the sliding of a finger down the finger-board of a violin’.⁴¹ The reviewer seems quite willing here to make intercultural comparisons of music, facilitated and possibly encouraged by the transcription in Western notation. The comparison of ‘our island’ also suggests a certain level of cultural empathy with the South Seas.

Attempts to compare or reconcile South Sea instruments to Western tonal systems were made on a number of occasions, it seems, as interest grew amongst the scholarly community in England. When Furneaux returned from the South Seas in 1774, among the artefacts he brought with him to England were musical instruments from the Isle of Amsterdam (present-day Tongatapu, part of the Kingdom of Tonga) and Tahiti, which he presented to the Royal Society. The Irish music theorist and writer Joshua Steele (1700–1791) published two studies of these instruments, which appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions of*

36 Agnew, ‘A Scots Orpheus in the South Seas’.

37 ‘B.’ was very probably Dr Burney. Even though he mainly reviewed works on music and this was a voyaging account, the review directly following this in the January issue of the *Monthly Review* was of *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* by Sir John Hawkins, also signed ‘B.’ It is unlikely that ‘B.’ would be anyone other than Dr Burney. It seems also that he occasionally wrote about maritime exploration (which is hardly surprising, given the profession of his son), as he signed himself ‘B . . . y’ after his review of an account of a voyage by Cook in July 1777.

38 B., ‘Review of *A Voyage round the World, in his Britannic Majesty’s Sloop, Resolution, commanded by Capt. James Cook, during the Years 1772, 3, 4, and 5*. By George Forster, F. R. S. Member of the Royal Academy of Madrid, and of the Society for promoting Natural Knowledge at Berlin’, *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 56/2 (1777), 465–466.

39 B., ‘Review of *A Voyage round the World*’, 466.

40 B., ‘Review of *A Voyage round the World*’, 466.

41 B., ‘Review of *A Voyage round the World*’, 466.



Figure 1 Transcription of music from New Zealand by James Burney, in B., 'Review of *A Voyage round the World, . . .* By George Forster,' *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 56/2 (1777), 466

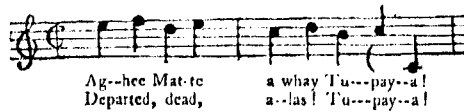


Figure 2 Transcription of music from New Zealand by James Burney, in B., 'Review of *A Voyage round the World, . . .* By George Forster,' *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 56/2 (1777), 466

the Royal Society in 1775.⁴² In his articles he sought to clarify the tuning system of two sets of panpipes and the Tahitian nose flute, going so far as to compose two melodies for the latter instrument (Figure 3). As this instrument could produce only four notes, however, it was limited in its adaptation to European musical phrase structure, and the 'general cast' of the melodies was 'melancholy'.⁴³ This instrument was undoubtedly the same as that seen and heard by Bougainville whilst it accompanied an 'Anacreontic song', and the one later drawn by Sydney Parkinson (see Figure 4).



Figure 3 Examples of melodies for the nose flute, composed by Joshua Steele, in 'Remarks on a Larger System of Reed Pipes from the Isle of *Amsterdam*, with Some Observations on the Nose Flute of Otaheite', *Philosophical Transactions* 65 (1775), 73

However, a critique of these articles was published in *The Monthly Review* in 1776, attacking the comparisons made with the music of the ancients:

The various arbitrary, and indeterminate sounds, given by the reed pipes of the barbarous islanders of the South Seas, nearly all of which we would undertake to produce by the weaker, or strong blowing through a penny whistle, are here seriously, and scrupulously, compared with the

⁴² Joshua Steele, 'Account of a Musical Instrument, Which Was Brought by Captain *Fourneaux* from the Isle of *Amsterdam* in the *South Seas* to *London* in the Year 1774, and Given to the Royal Society', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 65 (1775), 67–71; Joshua Steele, 'Remarks on a Larger System of Reed Pipes from the Isle of *Amsterdam*, with Some Observations on the Nose Flute of Otaheite', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 65 (1775), 72–78. Steele, incidentally, ended his days in Barbados.

⁴³ Steele, 'Remarks on a Larger System of Reed Pipes', 73.



Figure 4 *The Lad Taiyota, Native of Otaheite, in the Dress of his Country.* Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas, in His Majesty's Ship, the Endeavour.* Faithfully transcribed from the papers of the late Sydney Parkinson, draughtsman to Joseph Banks, Esq. on his late expedition, . . . round the world (London, 1773), plate IX

diatonic and *chromatic* genera of the polished Greeks. Such a comparison, were not the Author perfectly serious throughout the whole of these two Articles, might appear as an intended solemn mockery of ancient wisdom. The Author acknowledges, however, that the South Sea instrument does not, from his experiments, appear capable of furnishing sounds corresponding with the *dieses*, or quarter tones, in the *enharmonic genus* of the ancients. From hence we are very naturally



led to conclude, that the *enharmonic* division, at least, of the *Tetrachord*, is yet unknown to our musical brethren among the Antipodes.⁴⁴

Percy Scholes suggests that this article was probably written by Dr Burney.⁴⁵ Even if this is the case, it is apparent from other sources that the doctor did consider certain aspects of South Sea music to be in a state similar to that of European and Middle Eastern antiquity. The first volume of his *General History of Music* appeared in the same year, and made mention of the fact that a 'syrinx, or *Fistula Panis*, made of reeds tied together, exactly resembling that of the ancients, has been lately found to be in common use in the island of New Amsterdam, in the South Seas, as flutes and drums have been in Otaheite and New Zealand'. In the view of Burney, these discoveries, moreover, 'indisputably prove them to be instruments natural to every people emerging from barbarism'.⁴⁶ He provides further qualification:

They were first used by the Egyptians and Greeks, during the infancy of the musical art among them; and they seem to have been invented and practised at all times by nations remote from each other, and between whom it is hardly possible that there ever could have been the least intercourse or communication.⁴⁷

With this last statement, it appears that Burney is adhering to the concept of the common origins of humankind, and the natural progression that each people must follow in the development of their culture, regardless of isolation. In order to illustrate his 'Reflections on the Construction and Use of some particular Musical Instruments of Antiquity' in the first volume of the *General History*, he again uses the example of the *Fistula Panis* (panpipes) from the island of New Amsterdam, together with an Arabian instrument 'of the same kind', in order to provide his eighteenth-century readers with a living example of an ancient musical culture.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, Burney seems to confuse the three-tiered Enlightenment taxonomy of human social development as proposed by Rousseau: the primordial 'natural' stage, the 'primitive' middle stage and 'the civilized condition of modern Europeans . . . [and] a variety of ancient peoples'.⁴⁹ Instead, he identifies the musical instruments of eighteenth-century 'natural' peoples as vestiges of ancient instruments, which in his view proves the potential for musical progression along the lines of Europe and 'emergence from barbarism'.

COUNTERPOINT

In order for Burney to fit the South Sea Islanders into his understanding of global musical development, he had to attempt to determine their exact relationship with the music of antiquity, and thus their use of harmony, which he variously termed 'counterpoint' or 'music in parts'. One of the pressing questions facing music historians of the time was 'Whether the Ancients had COUNTERPOINT or Music in Parts?'; Burney addressed this issue in Section VIII of his *Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, included in the first volume of his *General History*.⁵⁰ Some years later, in 1784, this was again the subject of debate between musical scholars in Europe and those who had experienced the music of the South Sea Islanders at first hand. This renewed interest spawned a flurry of correspondence in 1784 between Lord Sandwich, Burney, Captain James King and one Mrs Phillips, née Susanna Elizabeth Burney, the third and favourite daughter of Charles.

44 'Philosophical Transactions, for the Year 1775 [Music]', *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 54 (1776), 29.

45 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 281.

46 Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume 1, 267.

47 Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume 1, 267.

48 Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume 1, 511.

49 Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 33.

50 Burney, *A General History of Music*, volume 1, 112–151.



Susanna was to have considerable exposure to South Sea culture and history in her life; she married Captain Molesworth Phillips in 1782 and seems to have written a number of letters on his behalf.

This correspondence apparently resulted from the desire of Lord Sandwich to write a decisive footnote on the music of the South Seas in time for inclusion in the three-volume *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, which was about to be published.⁵¹ The first two volumes were written by Cook and the third by King (who had assumed command of the *Discovery* in August 1779 after the death of Cook).⁵² The latter work remains a goldmine of eighteenth-century observations on music in the South Seas, and the comments of Lord Sandwich provide a concise summary of contemporary understanding of South Sea music.⁵³ The letters,⁵⁴ which provide important data, musical transcriptions, eyewitness accounts, opinions of Dr Burney and the drafts of Lord Sandwich, reveal a careful consideration of the evidence – the most reliable of which was undoubtedly the accounts of James Burney – and an attempt to classify the musical cultures of various South Sea Islands with reference to the music of, for example, ‘the american Indians whom we saw on the West Coast’ and ‘the Negroes in the west indies’.⁵⁵

The first letter concerning the music of the South Seas is written by James King to Lord Sandwich, and appears to have been prompted by the need to provide information quickly for the publication of the voyage account:

Soon after I came to England Doctor Burney catechised me upon the subject of the singing of the south sea islanders, and after hearing patiently my poor account, for I must confess total ignorance in Musick, I think he said that he showed not much regard what so indifferent a judge said, but that his son, who understood the matter, also agreed with me, that the separate parties sung together in different notes & that this overthrew his whole system. I have my Lord written to Doctor Burney begging he would inform me what his sons Ideas upon this subject were, when I receive his answer I shall transmit it to your Lordship, and either add or leave out as it may require.⁵⁶

Evidently Burney had assumed that the music of the South Seas was monophonic, as he believed was the music of the ancients, but once his system was ‘overthrown’, he sought clarification from son James and son-in-law Captain Phillips. In a letter to Lord Sandwich soon afterwards, Burney included a letter written by Mrs Phillips, which summarized the observations of her husband and gave accounts of public music exhibitions in the Friendly Islands:

In The Islanders regular Concerts Captain Phillips says each man had a Bamboo, which were of different lengths & gave different tones – these they beat against the ground, & each Performer assisted by the note given by this instrument, repeated the same note, accompanying it with words, by which means it was rendered sometimes short & sometimes long – that in this manner they sung in Chorus, & not only produced octaves to each other, according to their different species of voice, but fell on concords such as were not disagreeable to the Ear. this [*sic*] Performance was extremely monotonous – but in the open air, helped by the Bamboos, &, by their alternately swelling & diminishing the notes they sung, had not a disagreeable effect at a little

51 James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean. Undertaken, by the command of His Majesty, for making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere*, four volumes (London: printed by W. and A. Strahan for G. Nicol and T. Cadell, 1784).

52 Charles Burney and Alvaro Ribeiro, S. J., *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*, volume 1, 1751–1784 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 406, note 1.

53 Cook and King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, volume 3, 143–144.

54 These letters make up items 30 to 36 in manuscript collection 7218 (Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, 1771–1784) of the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

55 James King, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, 1771–1784, National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 7218, item 33.

56 King, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 30 January 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 30.



distance – Captain Phillips says they are very fond of this species of exhibition, & practice a good while, he believes, before they are allowed to sing in public – it is likely too that they pick out the best voices.⁵⁷

She also stated that James Burney ‘used to play on the piano forte a passage he recollected [being sung at the Friendly Isles]’, and included a four-bar musical transcription (Figure 5).⁵⁸ In his covering letter Dr Burney qualified his opinion of the relation of South Sea Islander music to that of the ancients:

Each performer having only one note consigned to him, which is regulated by the Sound of his Bamboo, is something like the limited power of our ringers in a Belfry, when no one has more than a single sound to his share. During the infancy of Music, in Greece, the Syrinx had a pipe for every sound, before a single pipe, by being perforated, produced the whole scale. Capt. Phillips’s Bamboo story implies infancy in the Southsea Music.⁵⁹

Uncertainty over the cultural relationships of geographically distant island groups in the Pacific, however, apparently led to a certain degree of confusion in the debate. Burney wrote in the same letter to Sandwich that he would enquire of Phillips whether ‘this method of singing in parts, as it is called, was peculiar to any one place or Island in the Southseas, or whether he recollects . . . having heard it elsewhere’.⁶⁰ In his next letter to Sandwich James King corrected some of Captain Phillips’s observations and noted that although the ‘inhabitants of the friendly islands have the same mode of singing with those of the Sandwich islands’, the English eyewitnesses ‘were present at no public exhibitions of musick at the Sandwich islands’.⁶¹ This resulted in an additional note to Lord Sandwich from Mrs Phillips, which included further particulars and an additional transcription of a Tahitian song complete with the sung text, as ‘Capt. P. remembers words & all’ (see Figure 6). She suggested contrasts between the public music performance of the Friendly Islands (Tonga) and the Society Islands (French Polynesia, including Tahiti) and compared the drums of the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii) with those of Otaheite (Tahiti).⁶² In this way she acknowledged her initial mistake in her first letter, which made little distinction between the musics of different islands. The transcriptions of Mrs Phillips are indicative of the increasingly popular fashion for notating national airs – quite often those of ‘exotic’ countries – which was becoming a significant activity amongst female musical amateurs of the time.⁶³ In the case of Mrs Phillips, however, the melodies were heard second-hand through her brother James and her seafaring husband.

Lord Sandwich made use of such information to compose the lengthy footnote which appeared in the third volume of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* and which is reproduced in the Appendix to this article. This note describes the public performance of ‘singing in parts’ and discusses the simultaneous playing of bamboo pipes, each of which had a different note. He considers it improbable that any ‘uncivilized people’ should arrive ‘by accident’ at the ‘degree of perfection in the art of music’ (counterpoint) without ‘dint of study, and knowledge of the system and theory upon which musical composition is founded’. It bewilders Sandwich that the small and isolated populations of the Pacific Ocean, in a natural state, were able to develop music in parts while the greatest civilizations of Eurasia appear not to have done so. ‘It is, therefore, scarcely credible, that a people, semi-barbarous, should naturally arrive at any perfection in that art, which it is much doubted whether the Greeks and Romans, with all their refinements in music, ever attained, and which the

57 Charles Burney and Susanna Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 32.

58 Burney and Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 32.

59 Burney and Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 32.

60 Burney and Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 32.

61 King, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 34.

62 Burney and Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 17 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 35.

63 See ‘The Art of Transcription’, in Ian Woodfield, *Music of the Raj: A Social and Economic History of Music in Late Eighteenth-Century Anglo-Indian Society* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159–169.

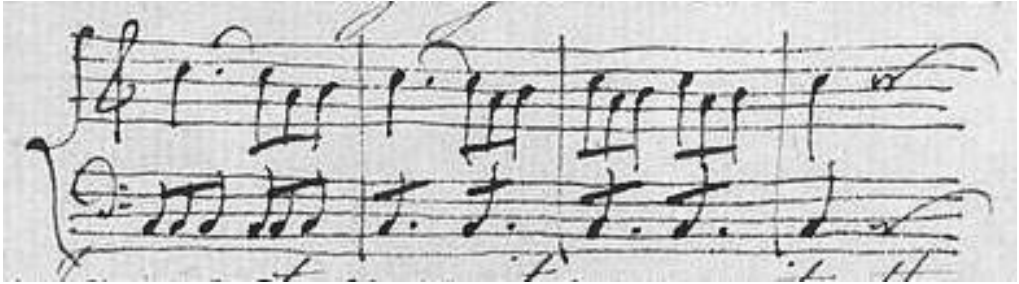


Figure 5 Transcription by Susanna Elizabeth Phillips (née Burney) of music played by James Burney, a passage he recollected being sung at the 'Friendly Isles' (Tonga). In a letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, 1771–1784, National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 7218, item 32

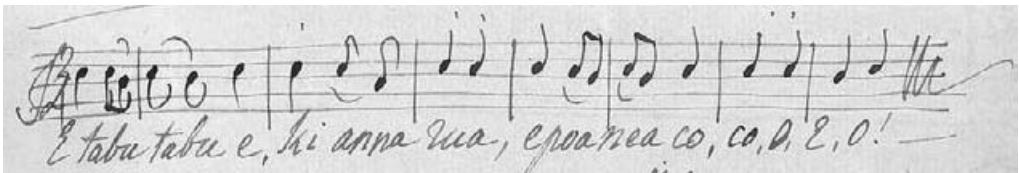


Figure 6 Transcription by Susanna Elizabeth Phillips (née Burney) of a Tahitian song complete with the sung text ('Capt. P. remembers words & all'). In a letter to Lord Sandwich, 17 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, 1771–1784, National Library of Australia, Canberra, MS 7218, item 35

Chinese, who have been longer civilized than any people on the Globe, have not yet found out.' With such a multiplicity of accounts and disparity of data, Lord Sandwich laments that James Burney, son of 'perhaps the greatest musical Theorist of this or any other age', did not make more transcriptions of musical concords, and concludes sadly that the 'curious matter' of counterpoint amongst the South Sea Islanders 'must be considered as still remaining undecided'. This conclusion reflects his own personal prejudice against the possibility of musical art developing into 'perfection' through counterpoint in any other place but Europe, even though he does acknowledge that 'to overturn this fact, by the reasoning of persons who did not hear these performances, is rather an arduous task'.⁶⁴ The perspective of the English scholars was apparently such that it was difficult to accept that a society not derived from European or Semitic antiquity could have developed music in parts.

'NOBLE SAVAGES' IN EUROPE

The search for further evidence of South Sea music and culture was aided by the visitation of two natives of Tahiti, Aotourou and Omai, who were brought to Europe by Bougainville and Cook as living personifications of the unfettered 'noble savage'. Aotourou (who also called himself 'Poutaveri', the Tahitian phonetization of the name 'Bougainville') volunteered to travel with Bougainville, probably assuming, as Pagden has suggested, that France was a neighbouring island.⁶⁵ Arriving in Paris in May 1769, he became something of a celebrity and was welcomed into society, particularly by the circle of the Duchesse de Choiseul.⁶⁶ He was shown the splendours of Versailles and the Tuileries, and was introduced to many leading scientists and philosophers. Although unable to master French, his became the voice of the philosophers Diderot and Bricaire de la Dixmerie in their two works of critical satire concerning French society at the time, respectively

64 Cook and King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, volume 3, 144.

65 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 128.

66 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 128.



the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* and *Le Sauvage de Taïti aux Français, avec un Envoi au Philosophe Ami des Sauvages*.⁶⁷ Bougainville apparently spoke no Tahitian, so it remains unclear how communication was possible between the two men.⁶⁸ The reaction of Aotourou to the arts of Europe was carefully noted by scholars, particularly by those whose work contrasted the effects of civilization with the natural state of man. As a 'noble savage' – or 'demi-savage', as Burney would call him⁶⁹ – Aotourou presented philosophers with the opportunity to observe what they assumed to be his open-minded and impartial judgment of French society and its mores. In so far as this concerned music, an account by Bougainville testifies to the tastes of Aotourou:

Le seul de nos spectacles qui lui plut était l'opéra: car il aimait passionnément la danse. Il connaissait parfaitement les jours de ce spectacle; il y allait seul, payait à la porte comme tout le monde, et sa place favorite était dans les corridors.⁷⁰

The only shew which pleased him, was the opera, for he was excessively fond of dancing. He knew perfectly well upon what days this kind of entertainment was played; he went thither by himself, paid at the door the same as every body else, and his favourite place was in the galleries behind the boxes. [Translator's note: In the French theatre there is, in the door of each box, a small window or hole, where people may peep through, which made it possible to Aotourou to enjoy even in the galleries the sight of the dances. F.]⁷¹

Dr Burney used the Parisian experiences of this Tahitian (whom he called 'Putaveri') to great effect in contributing to the propaganda which maintained the superiority of Italian music over French. He first quoted this anecdote in *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands and United Provinces*, later updating it for inclusion in the *Cyclopædia* of Abraham Rees:

An excellent judge of music and of human nature, who had been at Paris when M. de Bougainville brought thither a native of the new discovered island of Otaheite, . . . told me . . . that the effects of *French* music had been fairly tried upon *Putaveri* immediately on his arrival. 'I wish,' said my friend, 'you had been there, to have observed with me, what a strange impression the French opera made upon him; as soon as he returned to his lodgings, he mimicked what he had heard, in the most natural and ridiculous manner imaginable; this he would repeat only when he was in good humour; but as it was just before his departure that I saw him, he was melancholy, and would not dance, however entreated. I proposed to send for music, and one of the servants was ordered to play on his bad fiddle just without the door of the room; upon hearing this, *Putaveri* suddenly sprang up, and seizing two of the candlesticks, placed them on the floor, and danced his own country dance; after this, he gave the company a specimen of the French opera, which was the most natural and admirable parody that I have ever heard, and accompanied with all its proper gestures. I wished at this time to try the power of *Italian* music upon him; but there was no opportunity, for how could it be properly executed at Paris?'⁷²

67 Denis Diderot and Dominique Lanni, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003), originally published posthumously in *Opuscules philosophiques et littéraires: la plupart posthumes ou inédites* (Paris: L'imprimerie de Chevet, 1796); Nicolas Bricaire de la Dixmerie, *Le Sauvage de Taïti aux Français, avec un Envoi au Philosophe Ami des Sauvages* (Paris: Microéditions Hachette, 1972; originally published London, 1770.)

68 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 129.

69 Charles Burney, 'Putaveri', in *The Cyclopædia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, ed. Abraham Rees, 39 volumes (London: Longman, 1802–1819), volume 29 (1819), no pagination.

70 Bougainville, *Voyage autour du monde*, volume 2, 99.

71 Bougainville, *A Voyage round the World*, 265–266.

72 Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces; or, The Journal of a Tour through those Countries, undertaken to collect Materials for a General History of Music*, second, corrected, edition (London: T. Becket, J. Robson and G. Robinson, 1775), 124–126.



In his *Cyclopaedia* article Burney qualifies the operatic parody of Aotourou by describing it as ‘the screams and howlings at the Académie Royale de la Musique in the time of Louis XV’. Although there seems to have been no eyewitness account of the exposure of Aotourou to Italian music, Burney claims that ‘according to the late lord marshal, the experiment had been fairly made on another occasion’. The discussion of this subject is then abandoned in order to give an example of a Greek lady who, when brought to Paris, disliked French opera (likening it to ‘the hideous howlings of the Calmuc Tartars’) but upon hearing Gizziello sing Italian opera, ‘was quite dissolved in pleasure, and was ever after passionately fond of Italian music’.⁷³ Aotourou thus served Burney’s purposes very well in strengthening the argument of the ‘Queen’s Corner’ party, which favoured Italian musical style over French.⁷⁴ Not having had personal contact with the Tahitian, however, Burney could only rely on second-hand anecdotes and the sway of French opinion.

Arrangements were eventually made for Aotourou to return to his native land in a voyage commanded by Marion du Fresne. Carlos III of Spain gave permission for the ship to land at the Philippines if necessary, the Duchesse de Choiseul (a great friend of Aotourou) donated money, tools, seeds and cattle, and Bougainville financed part of the voyage himself.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, en route in November 1771, Aotourou died of measles.⁷⁶ This voyage, however, would have a number of important ramifications. Du Fresne and several of his men were killed and eaten by Maori warriors in the Bay of Islands in 1772,⁷⁷ an event that would resonate around the globe as tangible proof of cannibalism in the South Seas and would darken ‘the vision of the noble, gentle savage’.⁷⁸ Julien Crozet, who captained the voyage after the death of his superior, discussed these events with Rousseau upon his return to France, with the philosopher reputedly exclaiming, ‘Is it possible that the good Children of Nature can really be so wicked?’⁷⁹ James Burney, who had doubted that cannibalism existed in New Zealand, later provided a testimony in which he described his own discovery of ‘most horrid and undeniable proof’.⁸⁰ Reports of cannibalism would later spur on many of the ‘civilizing’ colonial and missionary endeavours of the nineteenth century.

When the *Adventure* returned to England from the South Seas in 1774, among its crew was a young Tahitian man named Mai, or Omai, as he was generally known in England.⁸¹ (Cook would return with the *Resolution* the following year.) Over the course of the voyage, which was captained by Tobias Furneaux, Omai and James Burney had exchanged language lessons.⁸² During his two-year sojourn in England Omai developed his language skills to the extent that he could make himself understood, ‘with the assistance of signs, & Action’.⁸³ He found certain consonants impossible to pronounce, however, as noted by Fanny Burney.⁸⁴ He received the patronage of Joseph Banks, Dr Solander and Lord Sandwich, had an audience with George III (who presented him with a sword and recommended that he be inoculated against smallpox),

73 Burney, ‘Putaveri’.

74 For a discussion of the so-called ‘Guerre des Bouffons’, which first broke out in Paris in 1752 between supporters of the French and Italian musical styles, see the Appendix ‘Italian music *versus* French music’ in Charles Burney and Percy Alfred Scholes, *An Eighteenth-Century Musical Tour in France and Italy: Being Dr. Charles Burney’s Account of His Musical Experiences* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 322–326.

75 Bougainville and Forster, *A Voyage round the World*, 266–267.

76 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 129.

77 Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog*, 291.

78 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 124.

79 Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog*, 291; E. H. McCormick, *Omai: Pacific Envoy* (Auckland: Auckland University Press and Oxford University Press, 1977), 151.

80 In Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 282.

81 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 282.

82 Michael Charles Alexander, *Omai, ‘Noble Savage’* (London: Collins and Harvill, 1977), 65.

83 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 193.

84 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 61.



was provided with a pension and was promised a safe passage home.⁸⁵ In addition, a magnificent portrait of him was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

There are several records of the reaction of Omai to music in eighteenth-century England. In August 1774 Burney and his son James were invited by Lord Sandwich to a musical party at Hinchinbrooke, at which Omai was present. A leading soprano of the day, Miss Martha Ray (the ward and mistress of Lord Sandwich, and the mother of his children⁸⁶), acted as hostess, and one evening sang tender arias accompanied by a harpsichord. This instrument was apparently of interest to Omai ‘mainly on account of the extraordinary clicking behaviour of the jacks’.⁸⁷ The reaction of Omai to a harpsichord seems to be no different from that of other non-Europeans of the time, as harpsichords were commonly exhibited to foreign dignitaries as demonstrations of European craftsmanship, technology and artistry. Omai was later requested by Lord Sandwich to sing one of his national songs.⁸⁸ During the same musical party at Hinchinbrooke, Handel’s oratorio *Jephtha* was performed on Wednesday 31 August, directed by Felice Giardini.⁸⁹

In late September Lord Sandwich and Omai attended the annual music meeting in Leicester,⁹⁰ which was, according to Joseph Cradock, ‘one of the best attended music-meetings that had been then in England. . . . *Jephtha* was the Oratorio that was selected, as it had been well practised at Hinchinbrook, and all that band attended. Giardini led.’ This event, for which Cradock was ‘Steward’, marked the opening of the General Infirmary at Leicester.⁹¹ The works of Handel featured prominently among those heard by Omai at this event. There was a performance of the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, with ‘full accompaniments, and greatly admired’, during the morning service; ‘Handel’s grand coronation anthem succeeded’ the sermon and was given an encore which was heard by ‘the surrounding multitude’ to whom the doors were opened freely.⁹² Lord Sandwich played the kettledrums on both days of the celebration. During the evening performance at Leicester Castle – for which eight hundred tickets were sold at full price – there was the performance of an Ode ‘written for the occasion, . . . set to music by Dr. Boyce’,⁹³ which must have been *Lo, on the thorny bed of care*.⁹⁴

Not surprisingly, Omai ‘attracted the eyes of the company more than any one’.⁹⁵ There are two reports of his reaction to these two days of large-scale music-making. William Gardiner, a composer and writer on music, observed these performances at the age of four and a half, and was taken into the orchestra by his father, where he stood close to the kettledrums and was captivated by the playing of Lord Sandwich. He later recalled in *Music and Friends; or, Pleasant Recollections of a Dilettante* that ‘When the music ceased, and the service of the church proceeded, the eyes of the congregation were fixed on a tall black man in a singular dress. He stood up all the time, in wild amazement at what was going on, for he had been brought down on purpose to see what effect this grand crash of musical sounds would have upon him.’⁹⁶ Cradock, on the other hand, asks, ‘“What became of poor Omai during all this celebration?” – “Of Omai?” replies a friend, “Why I have just left him in the tea-room, at the assembly, the happiest among the happy, very gallantly handing

85 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 72–75.

86 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 80.

87 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 94.

88 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 94.

89 McCormick, *Omai: Pacific Envoy*, 111.

90 McCormick, *Omai: Pacific Envoy*, 114.

91 Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs* (Westmead: Gregg International, 1972), volume 1, 120.

92 Cradock, *Memoirs*, volume 1, 122.

93 Cradock, *Memoirs*, volume 1, 123. This work was otherwise known as ‘Ode to Charity’.

94 Ian Bartlett and Robert J. Bruce, ‘Boyce, William’, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2002), volume 4, 161.

95 Cradock, *Memoirs*, volume 1, 122.

96 William Gardiner, *Music and Friends; or, Pleasant Recollections of a Dilettante* (London: 1838–1853), volume 1, 4–5; McCormick, *Omai: Pacific Envoy*, 114.



about cake and bread-and-butter to the ladies.”⁹⁷ Omai was admired by all for his easy and graceful manners, and especially his kind attention to ladies, but it seems unlikely that he entertained the latter with cakes for an entire two-day period. As his host and great patron Lord Sandwich was directly involved in the performances, it is probable that Omai had considerable exposure to eighteenth-century English music during these days.

In his biographical study of Charles Burney, Scholes writes that the doctor probably ‘took the opportunity of Omai’s visits to his house to make a little investigation into the characteristics of South Sea music’.⁹⁸ On Monday 28 November 1774 Susanna and James Burney attended a performance of *Isabella* at Drury Lane and saw Mr Banks and Omai in the audience. James issued an invitation to dinner, which Omai accepted by letter the following day. On Wednesday, he arrived for dinner at the house of the Burneys in St Martin’s Street, after having been taken by Mr Banks and Dr Solander to see the speech of the King at the House of Lords. Omai seems to have enchanted the gathered company, Fanny Burney commenting that ‘indeed he seems to shame Education, for his manners are so extremely graceful, & he is so polite, attentive, & easy, that you would have thought he came from some foreign Court’.⁹⁹ She wrote a detailed description of this first visit,¹⁰⁰ but made no mention of music, even though Dr Burney and Omai engaged in conversation, possibly with some aid from James, who spoke Tahitian ‘as fast as possible . . . fluently & easily’.¹⁰¹ A further visit of Omai to St Martin’s Street the following year provided an opportunity for Dr Burney to make musical enquiries. By this time James Burney had departed on the *Cerberus* to the American colonies and Omai, who received pocket money of five guineas per month as well as back pay from his service on the *Adventure*, had taken lodgings in Warwick Street, near Regent Street.¹⁰² ‘To our great surprise’, wrote Fanny Burney in her journal entry of 14 December 1775, ‘who, late in the Evening, should Enter, but Omiah!’. Omai came alone to call upon his friends the Burneys, explaining that he looked forward to the imminent return of James Burney, a ‘very *dood* man!’.¹⁰³ In 1832 Fanny (by this time Madame d’Arblay) published the *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, which gave a full account of the visit:

The Doctor asked whether he had been at the Opera? His answer was a violent and ear-jarring squeak, by way of imitating Italian singing. Nevertheless, he said that he began to like it a great deal better than he had done at first . . . Dr. Burney requested that he would favour us with a national song of Ulitea, which he had sung to Lord Sandwich, at Hinchbrook. He seemed much ashamed, and unwilling to comply, from a full consciousness now acquired of the inferiority of his native music to our’s. But the family all joined in the Doctor’s wish, and he was too obliging to refuse. Nevertheless, he was so modest, that he seemed to blush alike at his own performance, and at the barbarity of his South Sea Islands’ harmony; and he began two or three times before he could gather firmness to proceed. Nothing could be more curious, or less pleasing than this singing. Voice he had none; and tune, or air, did not seem to be even aimed at, either by composer or performer. ’Twas a mere queer, wild and strange rumbling of uncouth sounds. His music, Dr. Burney declared, was all that he had about him of savage.¹⁰⁴

In her original journal entry, however, Fanny writes that Omai ‘told us he thought the music [of the Opera] was *very fine*; which, when he *first* heard it, he thought *detestable*’. The journal, incidentally, does not clarify

97 Cradock, *Memoirs*, volume 1, 125.

98 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 284.

99 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 59–60.

100 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 59–63.

101 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 60.

102 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 96–97.

103 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 193, 194.

104 d’Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, volume 2, 4, 6–7.



whether Burney himself asked the question about the opera, as Fanny mentions late in the entry that he ‘came in during [Omai’s] visit’, asking Omai to favour the company with a song.¹⁰⁵

It is worthy of note that Burney seems to have made no further reference to the ‘squeak’ made by Omai in parody of the opera in London (which was presumably Italian opera). It may be that the admission of Omai that the music was ‘very fine’ confirmed the beliefs held by Burney concerning the superiority of Italian style, but it seems that the doctor was not consistent in his observations of ‘noble savage’ reactions to these competing styles. Although he used anecdotes of Aotourou (Putaveri) to deride French music – claiming in his *Cyclopædia* article that the effects of French music, ‘when fairly tried upon him immediately on his arrival, were not those of rapture, but ridicule’¹⁰⁶ – the report of Bougainville suggests that the two styles were equally alien to the islander. The opera was ‘the only shew which pleased him’ because ‘he was excessively fond of dancing’.¹⁰⁷ Whether or not Aotourou was enamoured of the singing, his predilection for dancing and his careful selection of performance dates suggest that his operatic tastes were not based solely on musical style. In any case, French opera is more likely to have included a substantial amount of dancing in the performance.

It was at the earlier musical party at Hinchingsbrooke that a ‘sober and discreet person’ with a ‘tolerable good ear’ made a mental note of the singing of Omai. This particular performance was mentioned in the same *Monthly Review* article which examined the writing of Joshua Steele on South Sea instruments. As Burney himself was present at Hinchingsbrooke, he does seem to be the most likely candidate for the authorship of this report, as proposed by Scholes:

That our good friends, the Otaheitans, how lame soever they may be in theory, or in the fabrication of musical instruments, practise the intervals of the diesis, and still minuter divisions of the tone, we have some reason to conclude, from the testimony of a sober and discreet person, who has a tolerable good ear, and has heard Omiah sing one of his country songs. The melody, in fact, seemed to be wholly *enharmonic* – slubbering and sliding from sound to sound by such minute intervals, as are not to be found in any known scale, and which made it appear to him as music, – if it could be called music, of another world. According to Mr. Steele, the nose flute of Otaheite affords, with a moderate blast, four sounds which proceed, in an ascending series, by the intervals of a semitone, a tone, and a semitone. The Author has given us two specimens of melody composed by himself, on this scanty scale, and written according to our notation. We violently suspect, however, that these tunes would scarce be recognized, as just specimens of his country music, by Omiah; from whom we think our Author might have derived more knowledge of this subject, by only listening to one of his songs, than by thus learnedly conjecturing what, and how, his countrymen sing, or may possibly sing, *a priori*.¹⁰⁸

This quoted testimony concurs with a later report of Susanna Phillips,¹⁰⁹ who was present at the dinner hosted by the Burneys at which Omai gave his repeat performance. She gave a more favourable opinion of South Sea music, however, as she did not consider Omai as being musically representative of all his compatriots. In a letter sent to Lord Sandwich on 11 February 1784 Mrs Phillips maintained that ‘Omai had a very bad ear, & could never anywhere have been made a musician – but the organs of many of the Islanders cannot be supposed to have been all equally unfavourable to music.’¹¹⁰

105 Burney and Troide, *The Early Journals and Letters*, volume 2, 195, 196.

106 Burney, ‘Putaveri’.

107 Bougainville and Forster, *A Voyage round the World*, 265.

108 ‘Philosophical Transactions, for the Year 1775 [Music]’, 29.

109 Burney and Ribeiro, *The Letters of Dr. Charles Burney*, 342, note 1.

110 Burney and Phillips, Letter to Lord Sandwich, 11 February 1784, Papers of John Montagu Sandwich, item 32.



When Cook set out on his third and final voyage in 1776, Omai returned to Tahiti on the *Resolution*.¹¹¹ James Burney joined him on this voyage as First Lieutenant of the *Discovery*, and would eventually write a vivid account of the murder of Cook on Hawaii.¹¹² According to B.[urney] in the *Monthly Review* of January 1777, among the items given to Omai to take back with him to Tahiti were 'a portable organ, a coat of mail, a suit of armour, and an *Electrical Machine*'.¹¹³ The 'portable organ' was actually a barrel-organ, according to a number of sources, with which Omai used 'to play and divert' his compatriots.¹¹⁴ Omai was built a house on the island of Huaheine, close to Tahiti, and was provided with livestock. He wept copiously on the departure of Cook, who wrote that 'such is the strange nature of human affairs, that it is probable that we left him in a less desirable situation than he was before his connection with us'.¹¹⁵

The episode of Omai in English society represents a pivotal moment in European connections with the Pacific during the Enlightenment. While Omai confirmed in English eyes the gracious nobility of the South Sea islanders and their potential compatibility with European customs, the opening of Tahiti to European technology, trade and disease brought about irrevocable changes in this isolated environment. Tahitians were still considered and treated as privileged beings by European visitors, however – a fact brought home by the fact that Captain William Bligh made some of his most careful diplomatic manoeuvres during his ill-fated *Bounty* expedition in order to secure Tahitian breadfruit as a cheap and renewable food source for black slave plantations in the West Indies.¹¹⁶ This curious dichotomy in the treatment of non-Europeans highlights the contradictory nature of eighteenth-century voyaging; on the one hand there was a continuation of commercial and colonial ventures established in previous centuries, and on the other a new and distinctive attempt to approach other cultures on their own terms for the advancement of European scientific and cultural understanding.

THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PACIFIC

The travels of Cook and the visit of Omai to England provided central themes for a number of stage works in England, France and Italy in the 1780s. Three works in particular stand out: the pantomime *Omai: Or, A Trip Round the World* (1785) with music by William Shield (1748–1829),¹¹⁷ the pantomime-ballet *La Mort du Capitaine Cook* (1788) with music by Jean-Baptiste Rochefort (1746–1819)¹¹⁸ and the anonymous Neapolitan opera seria *Cook o sia gl'inglesi in Othaiti* (1785), the libretto attributed to Calzabigi da Giampiero Tintori and the music possibly by Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816).¹¹⁹ By their very nature, the plots of these works tended to exaggerate and mythologize the actual events, while they also eulogized Cook and, to a certain extent,

111 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 130.

112 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 287.

113 B., 'Review of A Voyage round the World, in his Britannic Majesty's Sloop, *Resolution*, commanded by Capt. James Cook, during the Years 1772, 3, 4, and 5. By George Forster, F. R. S. Member of the Royal Academy of Madrid, and of the Society for promoting Natural Knowledge at Berlin', *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 56/1 (1777), 270.

114 Quoted in Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 1, 286.

115 In Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 130.

116 His second voyage, while successful in its objective, proved an eventual failure, as the slaves considered breadfruit to be unpalatable.

117 Hoskins, 'The Theatre Music of William Shield', 92; William Huse, 'A Noble Savage on the Stage', *Modern Philology* 33/3 (1936), 303–316. It is perhaps not inappropriate that what was probably the first piece of British musical theatre to be performed in the 'South Seas' was also by William Shield, his semi-opera *The Poor Soldier* (1783), the music of which was based largely on Irish folk melodies. This was performed by convicts and soldiers in the recently founded colony of Sydney in 1796. Roger Covell and others, 'Australia', in *The New Grove*, second edition, volume 2, 215.

118 Julian Rushton, 'Rochefort, Jean-Baptiste', in *The New Grove*, second edition, volume 21, 482.

119 Maria Irene Maffei, 'Alcune osservazioni sul *Cook o sia Gl'inglesi in Othaiti*', in *Ranieri Calzabigi tra Vienna e Napoli: Atti del convegno di studi (Livorno, 23–24 settembre 1996)*, ed. Federico Marri and Francesco Paolo Russo (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997), 209.



Omai. The work of Shield ends with an ‘Ode in Honour of Captain Cook’,¹²⁰ while the Rochefort pantomime, set on Hawaii, includes funeral music and marches.¹²¹

Omai was performed fifty times at Covent Garden in the season of 1785–1786, once by royal command, and in 1786 and 1788 it was revived for eight more performances in each year.¹²² It is likely that the publication of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* in 1784 prompted John O’Keeffe to write the libretto of this pantomime, and in its performance *Omai* ‘set a new standard in the technique of theatrical presentation’. It employed elaborate sets and costumes, and presented Omai as a Prince of Tahiti who fights the enchantress Oberea in order to regain his throne, before sailing for Britain to claim his bride ‘Londina’.¹²³ The music included airs, dances and choruses, and the highlight was a grand rondeau and chorus of South Sea Islanders (actually from Tonga, the ‘Friendly Islands’) in ‘their feathered Garments’, who also played South Sea percussion instruments.¹²⁴ Originally ‘exhibiting in Paris with uncommon Applause’ in 1789, *The Death of Captain Cook* was performed in London at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, ‘with the original FRENCH Music, New Scenery, machinery, and other Decorations’.¹²⁵ What Dr Burney, whose son had written a vivid eyewitness account of the death of Cook, would have made of this entertainment, or of its employment of French music, is hard to imagine. Nevertheless, these and many other works demonstrate the interest by contemporary artists in the latest geographical and cultural discoveries in the South Seas, similar to the fount of creative inspiration provided by the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF DR BURNEY

The connection of musical exploration with geographical discovery in the late eighteenth century was also made explicit in an extraordinary painting by the Irish artist James Barry. A close friend of the Burneys, Barry exhibited in 1783 a series of artworks in the Great Room of the Royal Society of Arts, London. One of these, entitled *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames*, depicted the famous navigators Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sebastian Cabot and James Cook (see Figure 7). These navigators are pushing a triumphal barge bearing the allegorical figure of ‘The Thames’, who holds a compass, and in front of the car are the figures of Europe, Asia, Africa and America.¹²⁶ In the midst of a ‘bevy of Nereids’ is Dr Charles Burney, ‘not only swimming in his clothes, but playing on a harpsichord, a new kind of water-music’.¹²⁷ His head is to be seen to the left of that of the middle Nereid, who has both arms outstretched. Fanny Burney, in her *Memoirs*, recalls that this depiction ‘caused no small diversion to the friends of the Doctor; and, perhaps, to the public at large’.¹²⁸ The association of Burney with the ‘eminent dead’ would seem something of a mystery, but one which is explained by the painter himself. ‘As music is naturally connecting with matters of joy and triumph, and that according to all necessary propriety, the retinue of the Thames could not appear without an artist in this way’.¹²⁹ Barry appears to liken the enterprise of Burney to that of the great explorers, writing that ‘if ever the musical genius of our islands should be suffered to emerge, . . . it must be under the auspices of such

120 Hoskins, ‘The Theatre Music of William Shield’, 92.

121 *The Death of Captain Cook; a grand serious-pantomimic-ballet, in three parts* (London: T. Cadell, 1789).

122 Huse, ‘A Noble Savage on the Stage’, 303.

123 Alexander, *Omai*, ‘Noble Savage’, 128.

124 John O’Keeffe, *A Short Account of the New Pantomime called Omai, or, A trip round the World, A new edition* (London: printed for T. Cadell, 1785), 15. A songbook of the music for this work is preserved in the British Library, shelfmark E.108.e.(2): William Shield, *Omai: Or, A Trip Round the World* (London: Longman & Broderip, 1786).

125 *The Death of Captain Cook*, title page.

126 Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney*, volume 2, 14.

127 In William L. Pressly, *James Barry: The Artist as Hero* (London: Tate Gallery, 1983), 83.

128 d’Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, volume 2, 341.

129 James Barry, R. A. [Royal Academy], *An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, at the Adelphi* (London: author, 1783), 62.

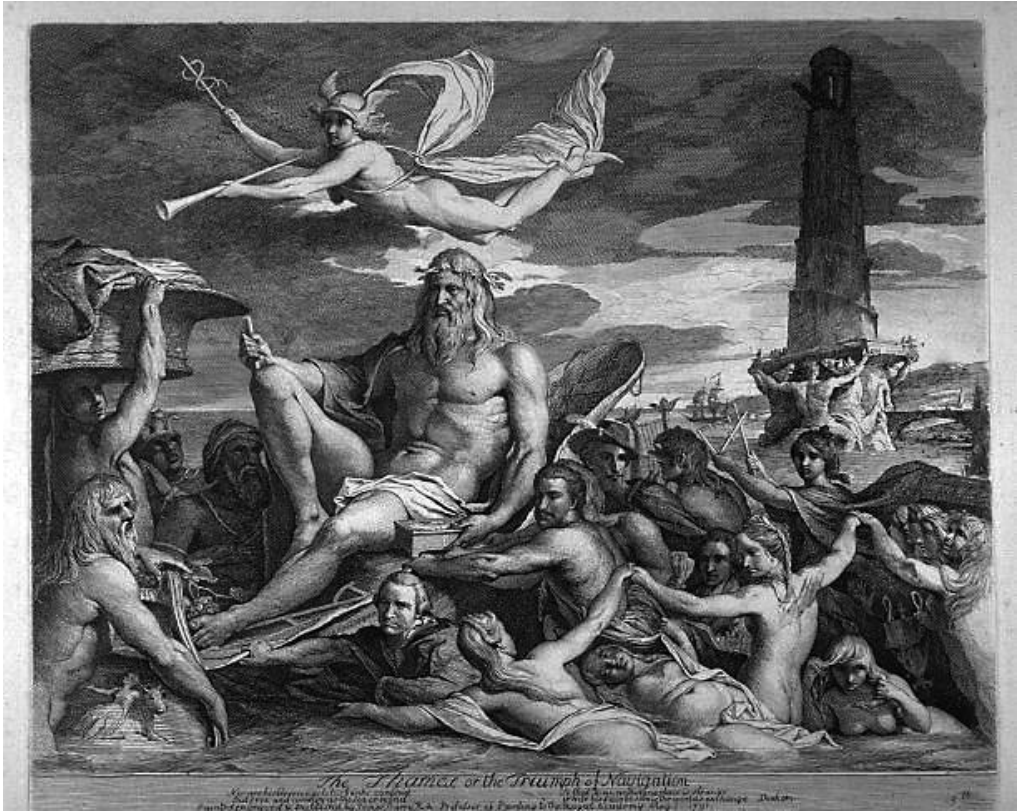


Figure 7 *The Thames or the Triumph of Navigation*, in *A Series of Etchings from Paintings, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, Adelphi* (London: printed by W. Bulmer and sold by Colnaghi, 1808), plate IV. After the original painting *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* (1783) by James Barry (1741–1806)

a leader as Doctor Burney, whose plan for establishing a national school of music . . . seemed so useful and practicable . . . [His] admirable history of music shews a mind capacious and excursive, that has left nothing unexplored from which his art might derive perfection.¹³⁰ While Barry seems to be enjoying a private joke by exhibiting his friend Burney ‘in company with a party of naked girls dabbling in a horse-pond’, as one viewer described it,¹³¹ he appears also to be paying a great compliment to the English champion of the art and science of music. By combining historical personages with allegorical figures and commerce with the arts, Barry encapsulates in this painting numerous elements of British commercial and cultural ambitions of the late eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

In spite of his close connection with maritime exploration and the observation of newly discovered musics, it seems that Burney maintained European music as his primary field of expertise. Any supposition that he had an insatiable interest in South Sea music, or that he drank deeply from the well of contemporaneous ethnographic research, can be somewhat tempered by examining two book reviews that came from his pen. These appeared in *The Monthly Review* in 1786 and 1794, and while the latter is anonymous, it is likely that it

¹³⁰ Barry, *An Account of a Series of Pictures*, 64–65.

¹³¹ In Pressly, *James Barry*, 83.



was written by Burney. The books in question were, respectively, *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts* by Thomas Robertson (1784) and *Sketches of the Origin, Progress, and Effects of Music, with an Account of Ancient Bards and Minstrels* by Richard Eastcott (1793).¹³² These publications included extensive discussion of the music of the South Seas and drew their sources exclusively from accounts of voyages. The former, which appeared in the same year as the footnote of Lord Sandwich, discusses ancient and modern musical theory, ‘speculations in music’ and the history of music. Labelled as the first volume (although no subsequent volumes appear to have been published), it includes a ten-page postscript ‘concerning the Music of the South Sea Islanders; the authentic Accounts of which, in Captain Cook’s last Voyage, were not published, till after the Sheets of the foregoing Volume came from the Press’. This is a rather verbose summary of all musical references in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (1784). Robertson does not distinguish between the different islands of the South Seas, apart from making one mention of ‘Otaheite’, and considers ‘the Music . . . solemn, gentle, and tender: the whole entertainments regular and grand. The European Voyagers’, he continues, ‘so cultivated and so refined, felt, in some instances, a sense of inferiority.’¹³³ He discusses vocal and instrumental music as well as ‘Harmony, or Music-in-Parts’ and identifies accounts of certain ceremonial chants as ‘Recitative’ in the following manner: ‘Sentences were often, at the public entertainments, recited in a musical tone; the Performers expostulated in a kind of Stanza or Recitative’. He generalizes that ‘in the South Sea Islands . . . four great Dances . . . with the Chiefs at their head . . . [last] from eleven till three o’clock of the day’, but finally admits that ‘we look still for more perfect light, from others, who, from like generous motives, may yet visit those distant regions of the earth’.¹³⁴

Although the reviewer, ‘Dr. B.’, writes a fourteen-page critique of the conventional historical contents of *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts*, giving a detailed comparison with famous works of music history and theory by himself, Rameau, Hawkins and others, he makes no comment whatsoever on the discussion of South Sea music, in spite of having recently contributed to its scientific consideration by Sandwich. Burney even suggests that a more accurate title for this book would be ‘inquiry into all the books the Author could find about the Fine Arts’.¹³⁵ In his *Sketches* of 1793 Reverend Richard Eastcott includes a supplementary chapter entitled ‘Short account of the state of music among the Russians, Swedes, the Indians of North America, and the inhabitants of the newly discovered Islands of the Pacific Ocean’.¹³⁶ The reviewer does make a brief reference to this chapter, writing that ‘the materials for this chapter, being extracted from more recent publications than those employed in the former part of the work, will consequently afford the reader amusement in proportion to their novelty’. He then points out that Eastcott questions in another chapter ‘whether the antients understood counterpoint, or music in different parts’, even after ‘Dr. Burney gave it as his opinion, in his dissertation on the music of the antients, that harmony, such as that of modern times, was wholly unknown to antiquity; and subsequent writers seem unanimously to [have] accede[d] to that conclusion.’¹³⁷ Any detailed discussion of South Sea music is conspicuous by its absence from both reviews. Burney apparently considered it more important to consolidate his position as the foremost music historian of the day by dealing primarily with the polemical topic of Western musical development.

Yet towards the end of his life Burney began to make plans for a monumental work that would dwarf his *General History*. This is evident from his article on Chinese music in Rees’s *Cyclopædia*, in which he describes his aim to collect materials for a study entitled *General History of Music in every civilized part of the Globe*. This plan remained embryonic, though a small number of articles on national musics were published by Rees. It

132 Thomas Robertson, *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1784); Richard Eastcott, *Sketches of the Origin, Progress, and Effects of Music, with an Account of Ancient Bards and Minstrels* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1793).

133 Robertson, *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts*, 452–454.

134 Robertson, *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts*, 460–461.

135 Dr. B., ‘Review of *An Inquiry into the Fine Arts*. By Thomas Robertson, Minister of Dalmeny, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Vol. the First. [1784]’, *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 74 (1786), 249.

136 Eastcott, *Sketches of the Origin, Progress, and Effects of Music*, 237–250.

137 ‘Review of *Sketches of the Origin, Progress, and Effects of Music, with an Account of the antient Bards and Minstrels*. . . . By the Rev. Richard Eastcott, of Exeter. 1793’, *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal, Enlarged* 13 (1794), 49.



is clear from Burney's proposed title that 'comparative musicology' from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries sought to differentiate between 'civilized' and 'natural' peoples. François-Joseph Fétis's *Histoire générale de la Musique*, of which the first five volumes were published from 1869 to 1876, made a clear distinction between peoples living within civilization and those living according to natural law. The failure of either scholar to complete such a grandiose project points to the flaws inherent in any attempt to categorize all musics from a Eurocentric viewpoint, but their work should not of course be viewed from a presentist perspective. Aside from anything else, this would ignore the sheer difficulty of their task, given their reliance on secondary sources and eighteenth-century modes of communication and transportation. Nor can the voyages of discovery undertaken by Cook, Bougainville, Malaspina and others be seen in the same light as previous and subsequent acts of exploitation and colonialism. Burney himself acknowledged his debt to naval endeavour in order for cultural enquiry to be conducted, writing in the dedication to the King of his account of the 1784 Handel commemoration:

The delight which Music affords seems to be one of the first attainments of rational nature; wherever there is humanity, there is modulated sound. The mind set free from the resistless tyranny of painful want, employs its first leisure upon some savage melody. Thus in those lands of unprovided wretchedness, which Your Majesty's encouragement of naval investigation has brought lately to the knowledge of the polished world, though all things else were wanted, every nation had its Music; an art of which the rudiments accompany the commencements, and the refinements adorn the completion of civility, in which the inhabitants of the earth seek their first refuge from evil, and, perhaps, may find at last the most elegant of their pleasures.¹³⁸

The 'Enlightened' voyages of this time, which occasioned arguably the most peaceful contact ever between nationally ordained European explorers and certain unknown isolated peoples, opened the Pacific to scientific and cultural research. Paradoxically, this led to extensive programmes of European colonization and settlement at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. However, the 'Enlightened' voyages were mostly undertaken with altruistic motives; Captain Cook was instructed, for example, that settlement was not to take place except with the express 'Consent of the Natives' and only 'if you find the Country uninhabited'.¹³⁹ He himself wrote during his final voyage that although the Tahitians had made offers pertaining to settlement, he hoped it would 'never happen'.¹⁴⁰

Music figured prominently among the ethnographic observations made by the British, French and, later, Spanish scientists and naturalists who travelled to the Pacific in the eighteenth century, and Charles Burney was one of the most eminent scholars to take an interest in such reports. Research into his extensive correspondence and enormous published output may reveal many more facets of the scholarly interests of this 'father' of musicology. The *Cyclopædia* of Abraham Rees, for example, contains approximately two thousand articles on music written by Burney, in which he probably sought to create an English equivalent to the *Dictionnaire de la Musique* of Rousseau.¹⁴¹ Burney clearly saw himself as the English counterpart to Rousseau, and admired him greatly, 'whatever he may have thought of other aspects and theories of the man himself'.¹⁴² It seems appropriate that Burney, as an admirer of a key proponent of the 'noble savage' philosophy and as the father of a prominent figure in Pacific exploration, was eventually to consider South Sea music in the wake of his research into the origins and development of the European art.

138 Charles Burney, *An account of the musical performances in Westminster-Abbey, and the Pantheon: May 26th, 27th, 29th; and June the 3d, and 5th, 1784. In commemoration of Handel* (London: printed for the benefit of the musical fund (no publisher) and sold by T. Payne and son, 1785), dedication to the King.

139 In Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 128.

140 Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, 128.

141 Roger Lonsdale, 'Dr. Burney's "Dictionary of Music"', *Musicology* 5 (1979), 159.

142 Lonsdale, 'Dr. Burney's "Dictionary of Music"', 159. Dr Burney was greatly heartened several times in his life to engage in correspondence with Rousseau, whose Italian-style operetta (or *intermède*) *Le Devin du Village* he also translated and rearranged as *The Cunning Man*.



While this article has had to offer fairly broad biographical surveys of the principal protagonists in the remarkable story of cultural contact between Europe and the South Seas, it is hoped that it has contributed to a better understanding of European reactions to, and perceptions of, South Sea cultures and musics in the second half of the eighteenth century. Burney in particular was aware of musical observations made during voyages of exploration, and he sought to incorporate new findings into his own 'global' understanding of music history. Together with other music scholars such as Joshua Steele, he attempted to find a level of compatibility between disparate musical cultures, believing the Italian musical style to be closer to a 'natural' state of music such as that of the South Sea Islanders. While the presence of harmony in the South Seas, as reliably reported by his son James, overthrew his initial conclusions, he was able to accept its existence, and presumably awaited further evidence from subsequent voyages. The Pacific voyages of the Enlightenment thus not only took European music and musical inquiry to the South Seas; they had the reciprocal effect of making European scholars re-evaluate the artistic progress of their own civilization.

APPENDIX

FOOTNOTE BY LORD JOHN MONTAGU, FOURTH EARL OF SANDWICH, IN JAMES COOK AND JAMES KING, *A VOYAGE TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN. UNDERTAKEN, BY THE COMMAND OF HIS MAJESTY, FOR MAKING DISCOVERIES IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE*, 3 VOLUMES (LONDON: PRINTED BY W. AND A. STRAHAN FOR G. NICOL AND T. CADELL, 1784), VOLUME 3, 143–144

As this circumstance, of their *singing in parts*, has been much doubted by persons eminently skilled in music, and would be exceedingly curious if it was clearly ascertained, it is to be lamented that it cannot be more positively authenticated.

Captain Burney, and Captain Phillips of the Marines, who both have a tolerable knowledge of music, have given it as their opinion, that they did sing in parts; that is to say, that they sung together in different notes, which formed a pleasing harmony.

These gentlemen have fully testified, that the Friendly Islanders undoubtedly studied their performances before they were exhibited in public; that they had an idea of different notes being useful in harmony; and also, that they rehearsed their compositions in private, and threw out the inferior voices, before they ventured to appear before those who were supposed to be judges of their skill in music.

In their regular concerts, each man had a bamboo, which was of a different length, and gave a different tone: these they beat against the ground, and each performer, assisted by the note given by this instrument, repeated the same note, accompanying it by words, by which means it was rendered sometimes short, and sometimes long. In this manner, they sung in chorus, and not only produced octaves to each other, according to their different species of voice, but fell on concords, such as were not disagreeable to the ear.

Now, to overturn this fact, by the reasoning of persons who did not hear these performances, is rather an arduous task. And, yet, there is great improbability that any uncivilized people should, by accident, arrive at this degree of perfection in the art of music, which we imagine can only be attained by dint of study, and knowledge of the system and theory upon which musical composition is founded. Such miserable jargon as our country Psalm-singers practise, which may be justly deemed the lowest class of counterpoint, or singing in several parts, cannot be acquired in the coarse manner in which it is performed in the churches, without considerable time and practice. It is, therefore, scarcely credible, that a people, semi-barbarous, should naturally arrive at any perfection in that art, which it is much doubted whether the Greeks and Romans, with all their refinements in music, ever attained, and which the Chinese, who have been longer civilized than any people on the globe, have not yet found out.



If Captain Burney, (who, by the testimony of his father, perhaps the greatest musical theorist of this or any other age, was able to have done it), had written down, in European notes, the concords that these people sung; and if these concords had been such as European ears could tolerate, there would have been no longer doubt of the fact: but, as it is, it would, in my opinion, be a rash judgement to affirm that they did or did not understand counterpoint; and therefore I fear that this curious matter must be considered as still remaining undecided.