JOHN BENNETT fine paintings

A full-length portrait of a Hanoverian officer holding a spontoon standing in a landscape, a military encampment by a castle beyond

Sold

HUGH BARRON



REF: 374807

1 London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747

Height: 91.7 cm (36.1")

Width: 71.5 cm (28.1")

Framed Height: 112 cm (44.1")

Framed Width: 91 cm (35.8")

Description

HUGH BARRON F.S.A.
English School
1747-1791Oil on canvas, signed and dated 176991.7 x 71.5 cms361/8 x 281/8 inchesOverall framed size 112 x 91 cms 441/8 x 353/4 ins

Hugh Barron, although a fine portrait painter and pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds, seemed just as likely destined to become a musician. He was a child prodigy on violin and his ability was noted by various music lovers and he was invited to play his first concert on 23rd April 1760 at the Haymarket Theatre. It was billed as The Solos of young Performers who never appeared in Concert and featured musicians who were all aged between nine and thirteen. Events such as these, which demonstrated the great talent of youth, were popular in the eighteenth century and this concert had Gertrud Schmeling (later Mara) and the thirteen year old Barron on violin, James Cerveto on cello, and Esther Burney playing the harpsichord. The programme lists him as: "Master Barron, age 13, on the violin". His younger brother William Augustus, although not participating in this concert, was a talented violincellist.

Robert Walpole, in his Anecdotes of Painting in England, later observed that Barron had been a pupil of Felice di Giardini, the Royal Director of Music and leading violinist of his generation writing: "Painting is his profession but Musick is his amusement." Other music lovers at the time, including Alexander, 10th Earl of Eglinton, Dr Charles Burney and James Boswell were equally impressed by the young Barron and Boswell wrote in 1763: "…a boy of great genius, both as a painter and a musician, who will probably be a man of great eminence."

His father John was an apothecary at the Westminster Dispensary in Soho and it is not known what fostered the artistic drive and talent both in Hugh and his younger brother William Augustus who became a topographical landscape painter. So, despite being regarded as the best amateur violinist of his time, Hugh commenced his artistic training in 1764 at Fournier's Academy and was then apprenticed to Reynolds from about 1764 to 1766. He exhibited his first portrait at the Society of Artists in 1766 while still living and working with Reynolds.

In 1767, he moved into his own premises in Panton Street, Soho and established his own studio there and continued to exhibit at the Society of Artists up until 1778. He decided to travel to Rome to further his training and gain commissions and went via Lisbon in 1771 where he produced some conversation pieces for the British Colony there. He arrived in Rome in October 1772 and remained there until 1778. The sculptor Thomas Banks, writing to Nathaniel Smith on 31st July 1773 from Rome, states that Barron "…has great merit in the portrait way…has the most of Sir Joshua's fine manner of any of his pupils, and it is beyond doubt, that when he returns to England, he will cut a great figure in his way."

Indeed, in Barron's earlier portraiture such as the 1768 work just called Lady and now in the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, he was very close in style and technique to Reynolds. In fact, so close was ...

London, England

+44 (0) 20 8748 1747