



Press Release

Celebrated Viola Player Alan George becomes next Academy of St Olaves' Chamber Orchestra Musical Director

York, N Yorks, UK, 30 March, 2009:

Popular York based chamber orchestra the [Academy of St Olave's](http://www.academyofstolaves.org.uk) today announced that the celebrated Viola player, Alan George is to take up the position of Musical Director from September 2009.

Alan hails originally from Cornwall and studied violin with Colin Sauer at Dartington Hall, viola with Herbert Downes in London, and chamber music with Sidney Griller at the Royal Academy of Music. In 1968 he won an open scholarship to King's College Cambridge, where he became one of the founder members of the [Fitzwilliam String Quartet](http://www.fitzwilliam.ac.uk), remaining as its only viola player for all 40 years of its existence (so far!). Since 1976 he has been actively involved with the period instrument movement, including eleven years as principal viola with John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique.

The close relationship the Fitzwilliam shared with Dmitri Shostakovich is well documented and having introduced his last three string quartets to the West, the Fitzwilliam soon became the first ever group to record and perform all fifteen – complete cycles were given in a number of major centres, including London, New York, and Montréal. The recordings (now reissued for a third time) gained many international awards – including the very first Gramophone Award for chamber music (in 1977) and inclusion in the same magazine's "Hundred Greatest-ever Recordings" (November 2005) – securing for the Fitzwilliam a world wide concert schedule and a long term contract with Decca.

Until 1988 Alan was lecturer in music and director of the chamber orchestra at the University of York, conducting the orchestra in concerts in York, Botton Village, Leeds University, Royal Holloway College, Ryedale Festival and Semaines de Musique de Quimper in France. Under Alan's direction the orchestra appeared on BBC Radio 3's Youth Orchestras of the World programme and gave the British Première of Prof. Brian Newbould's realisation of Schubert's Symphony No.10. Additionally Alan has been the guest conductor with a number of other orchestras including the Bradford Chamber Orchestra, University of London Orchestra, Nottingham University Orchestra and Orchestra on the Hill (Cambridge).

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The Academy of St Olave's

Alan is the author of three studies of Shostakovich's chamber music as well as numerous articles and programme notes; he has also presented talks on BBC radio and at various festivals and concert venues throughout Britain and America. He has been tutor in viola at the Royal Northern College of Music, and visiting lecturer/examiner at many colleges and universities both here and abroad. He is now principal viola in the Southern Sinfonia. In 1981 he was made an Honorary Doctor of Music at Bucknell University, USA, and similarly honoured by the University of York in 2006.

He is a trustee of the registered charity [Jessie's Fund](#) – a memorial to his daughter Jessica, who died of a brain tumour in 1994 – which helps sick children through the therapeutic power of music, and which the Fitzwilliam regularly supports in its concerts.

For further information please contact info@academyofstolaves.org.uk