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Press Release

Celebrated Viola Player Alan George in Debut Season with the Academy of St Olaves' Chamber Orchestra

York, N Yorks, UK, 24 November, 2009:

Internationally renowned Viola player, Alan George continues his debut season as musical director of popular York based chamber orchestra the Academy of St Olave's at 8pm on Saturday January 23rd 2010 at St Olave's Church, Marygate, York. The concert will feature music by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven.

The evening will begin with Mozart's last and greatest overture, The Magic Flute. Since Mozart conducted the premier himself in Vienna in 1791, Magic Flute has been one of his most popular works.

Marking the 200th anniversary of the death of Joseph Haydn, the evening's soloist will be University of York graduate Adam Mickelthwaite who will play Haydn's famous trumpet concerto. Haydn composed the concerto in 1796 for his long time friend Anton Weidinger, who is reputed to have been the inventor of the first keyed trumpet which could play chromatically over its whole range.

After the interval we will hear Beethoven's visionary Symphony No. 6 "*Pastoral*". Beethoven was a lover of nature who spent a great deal of his time on walks in the country and frequently left Vienna to work in rural locales. The symphony is highly programmatic and Beethoven remarked, "*It is left to the listener to find out the situations ... Anyone that has formed any ideal of rural life does not need titles to imagine the composer's intentions.*"

The Academy's season continues in 2010 on June 19th with a programme that includes Gluck's Overture to Iphigenia in Aulis, Nielsen's Pan & Syrinx, Charles Ives's evocative Central Park in the Dark and the season finale: Bizet's zestful Symphony in C. The morning of June the 19th will also see the Academy perform their annual Children's Concert. Previous Academy children's concerts have featured works such as Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf, Poulenc's Babar the Elephant and last year Mendelssohn's A Midsummer Night's Dream and have proved very popular with local school children and parents.

Alan George

Alan George lives in York but hails originally from Cornwall. He 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, remaining as its only viola player for all 40 years of its existence. 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).

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.

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