

THE PRESS

Review: Academy of St Olave's, St Olave's Church, York

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By Martin Dreyer

Now that professional orchestras have forsaken York for good (somebody please tell me it is not true), concertgoers are turning in droves to our excellent home-grown ensembles for their symphonic kicks. Witness the overflow house for the Academy's latest outing: St Olave's has rarely been so crammed.

It may have had something to do with the attractive mainstream programme – Mozart overture, Haydn concerto, Beethoven symphony — or perhaps the orchestra's rude health under its new conductor Alan George, founding viola of the Fitzwilliam String Quartet. Of course the group now contains few, if any, of the youngsters it was set up to train: it's an "academy" in name only.

Apart from the very elongated chords at the start, Mozart's overture to *The Magic Flute* provided a peppy opener, the strings slipping straight into the groove. Adam Micklethwaite, too, was quick out of the blocks as soloist in Haydn's *Trumpet Concerto*, ripping into his cadenza without a care. If he was a touch over-excited in the finale, he was still persuasive.

Beethoven's *Sixth Symphony* brought out the best in the Academy's excellent woodwinds, slickly dabbing in their birdsong. By now, the baton-less conductor had moderated the amplitude of his beat and there was a great deal more subtlety in the orchestra's response. The storm was a truly thunderous affair, especially in this relatively confined space. There was a slight loss of concentration in its aftermath - but the orchestra is clearly thriving under its new regime.

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