

## Academy of St Martin in the Fields biography

‘The hallmarks of the Academy sound – which is typically brilliant, light, reserved, even polite – were still there in chipper, clean performances of two early symphonies set at blazing-fast tempos.’

WASHINGTON POST, 5th NOVEMBER 2010

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields – one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world – is renowned for its polished and refined sound, rooted in outstanding musicianship. Formed in 1958 from a group of leading London musicians, and working without a conductor, the Academy gave its first performance in its namesake church on 13th November 1959. Today, the Academy performs some 100 concerts around the world each year, with as many as 15 tours each season. In 1993, the Academy became the first and only orchestra to be awarded the Queen’s Award for Export.

The Academy’s partnership with its founder Sir Neville Marriner remains the most recorded pairing of orchestra and conductor and, with over 500 recordings under its belt, the Academy is one of the most recorded chamber orchestras in the world. Originally directed by Sir Neville from the leader’s chair, the collegiate spirit and flexibility of the original small, conductorless ensemble remains an Academy hallmark. This tradition continues today with the appointment of virtuoso violinist Joshua Bell as its new Music Director with effect from September 2011.

It was clear from the Academy’s first collaboration with Joshua in 1986 – a recording of Bruch’s Violin Concerto No. 1 coupled with Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto for Decca – that this would be a special relationship. The partnership has grown and flourished over the past 25 years and in addition to a number of outstanding recordings – Romance of the Violin released in 2004 was named Billboard Classical CD of the Year and, three years later, Vivaldi’s Four Seasons reached No. 1 in the Billboard Classical Chart – their concerts together in the UK, Europe, the United States,

Asia and Australia have been electrifying. In addition to performing with the Academy, Joshua's new role will involve working with the orchestra to create its annual programme of inspirational and inventive concerts.

Alongside its performances with Life President Sir Neville, Principal Guest Conductor Murray Perahia, and Music Director Joshua Bell, the orchestra continues to collaborate with some of today's most thrilling musicians including Julia Fischer, Julian Rachlin, Janine Jansen and Anthony Marwood. Next season's five-concert London series features Gabriela Montero, Joshua Bell and Anthony Marwood; there are European tours with Murray Perahia, Jaime Martin, Sir Neville Marriner, Julia Fischer and Håkan Hardenberger; and a 15-city American tour with Joshua Bell.

In tandem with its London performances and international tours, the Academy has initiated Outward Sound, a programme of outreach activities open to participants of all ages, backgrounds and abilities which seeks to connect with the communities in which it performs. Outward Sound brings music-making opportunities to those who otherwise may not have access to music. In May, following a week-long residency, Academy musicians performed alongside members of Southbank Sinfonia, an orchestra for young professional instrumentalists. In the coming months, Outward Sound will travel to Newcastle, Frimley and Nottingham to create new music with schoolchildren.

'The musicianship that streamed from the stage last night was beyond superlatives... The playing from this legendary conductor-less orchestra coupled all the grandeur of epic Beethovenian playing with the flawless intimacy of seasoned chamber musicians.'

THE GLASGOW HERALD, 20 APRIL 2007

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields gratefully acknowledges the support of its Principal Sponsor, Siemens.

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