



The
Academy of
St Mary-le-Bow

Beethoven

Symphony No. 6
in F major, Op. 68

Mozart

Clarinet Concerto
in A major, K. 622

Clarinet
Peter Sparks

Leader/Director
Alexandra Caldon

17 May 2025 – 7:30pm
St. Gabriel's Pimlico, SW1V 2AD

Tickets £18 Adult, £12.50 under 30/Friends
Available at www.academyofstmarylebow.com

Welcome

Good evening and welcome to this evening's concert where we are delighted to welcome back two fantastic guest artists to perform with the orchestra, Alexandra Caldon and Peter Sparks. In 2023 Alexandra led the orchestra in a performance of Beethoven's 5th Symphony, and before that, in 2020, Peter directed our wind players in a performance of Mozart's *Gran Partita*. What a treat it has been to have them join together for this project, this time with Peter as soloist. We are very grateful to both of them for their incredible musicality, insight, and energy during our rehearsals, and we can't wait to perform alongside them this evening. Our unconducted projects are a highlight of the orchestra's season, undoubtedly bringing out the best in our players, and this year we've had a wonderful time preparing these masterpieces by perhaps the two most famous classical composers ever to have lived, Mozart and Beethoven.

My love of classical music undoubtedly stemmed from watching Disney's *Fantasia* on repeat as a child, almost until the VHS was worn out! In *Fantasia*, Beethoven's sixth symphony underscores a scene in a mythical ancient Greece with unicorns dancing through the air, revelling villagers and gods forging thunderbolts and hurling them to earth. This is, in fact, not far from Beethoven's original programmatic intentions for the piece, which he wrote into the score, depicting a day in the countryside, a village party, a thunderstorm and the fresh calm that follows - though I'm not sure he had the unicorns in mind.

The orchestra is delighted to have Peter Sparks with us to perform Mozart's Clarinet Concerto tonight. Even to non-classical music lovers, I'm sure this concerto will be recognisable (especially the opening to the slow movement). It's a piece that seems somehow to live in public consciousness, no doubt due to the complete genius of its composition, combining particularly catchy melodies with thrilling virtuosity. Without wishing to spoil any surprises, I know Peter has a special encore prepared (find out more [here](#)), so be sure to clap loudly!

Tonight is our season's penultimate concert, with our final performance taking place on 16th June (Monday), when we will be performing a wonderful programme of music for strings at our home of St Mary-le-Bow. The music is all by living composers, including Takashi Yoshimatsu and Anna Meredith. The centrepiece of the programme is Max Richter's *The Four Seasons Recomposed*, featuring soloists from the orchestra - we hope to see you there.

Alex Fryer

(Academy of St Mary-le-Bow, Principal Conductor and Artistic Director)

Programme

Clarinet Concerto
in A major, K. 622

W. A. Mozart
(1756 – 1791)

- I. Allegro
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondo: Allegro

- Interval -

Symphony No. 6 'Pastoral'
in F major, Op. 68

L. V. Beethoven
(1770 – 1827)

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
(*Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande /*
Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside)
- II. Andante molto mosso
(*Szene am Bach / Scene by the brook*)
- III. Allegro
(*Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute / Merry gathering of country folk*)
- IV. Allegro
(*Gewitter, Sturm / Thunder, Storm*)
- V. Allegretto
(*Hirtengesang. Frohe und dankbare Gefühle nach dem Sturm /*
Shepherd's song. Cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm)

Programme Notes

Mozart

Clarinet Concerto in A major, K. 622

Written in the final year of his life, the clarinet concerto in A Major was Mozart's last complete composition and is often described as his 'swan song'. Premiered mere months before his premature death at the age of 35, it was written for his friend and fellow Freemason, the well-known clarinettist Anton Stadler.

Comments from Mozart's widow and sister-in-law indicate their low opinion of Stadler, who supposedly borrowed money from Mozart and indulged in gambling. Nonetheless, Stadler's reputation as a virtuoso clarinettist was indisputable, and in addition to the concerto, Mozart wrote for him the Quintet, K.581, obbligatos in two arias in the opera *La clemenza di Tito*, and the Trio for Viola, Clarinet, and Piano, K. 498.

Initial sketches indicate that Mozart first conceived of the concerto for basset horn, before adapting it for the newer basset clarinet (of which Stadler was a co-inventor), which had an extended lower range compared to a standard clarinet but was not as low as the basset horn. When it was published posthumously, certain passages were transposed to be playable on a standard clarinet; however, as the original manuscript was lost, it is unclear which parts were changed.

The opening movement recalls the purity and brilliance of the Piano Concerto No. 23, K. 488, also in A Major, with elaborate and expressive lyricism showcasing the clarinet's wide range of sonorities.

The second movement is simplistic both in its ternary 'A-B-A' structure and its harmonic development, allowing for a sense of serenity and stillness. The soulful beauty of the clarinet melody soars above this peaceful accompaniment, creating a sense of poignancy and hopefulness.

The final movement is a lively rondo in 6/8 time, featuring energetic and playful exchanges between the clarinet and the orchestra, filled with jaunty scalar passages. This display of virtuosity truly showcases the range and versatility of the youngest member of the woodwind family.

Beethoven

Symphony No. 6 'Pastoral' in F major, Op. 68

Beethoven began composing his sixth symphony whilst still completing his fifth, and both works were premiered together on December 22, 1808, at the Theater-an-der-Wien in Vienna. Despite the hall's heating going out, the audience remained in their seats, enduring the freezing conditions of a Viennese winter to hear these two works for the first time - works that would become two of the most recognisable pieces of music in the world.

Symphony No. 6 is tonally much lighter than Symphony No. 5, with none of the struggle and darkness found in the 5th. It also differs from all of his other symphonies as it's a programmatic symphony. Programme music is instrumental music that aims to depict a specific story, scene, idea, or emotion, and though the 6th symphony is by no means the first example of a composer writing programmatic music, it is one of the earliest and most notable examples of a symphony being used in this way.

Beethoven was known for his great love of nature, commenting in a letter to his friend Therese Malfetti in 1808, "How happy I am to be able to wander among the bushes and grass, under trees and over rocks, no man can love the country as I love it." The tranquillity of nature also seemed to provide Beethoven solace and relief from the anguish of his worsening deafness, as he wrote: "My miserable hearing does not trouble me here. In the country it seems as if every tree said to me: 'Holy! holy!' Who can give complete expression to the ecstasy of the woods! O, the sweet stillness of the woods!" It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that nature provided the inspiration for his Symphony No.6, which is often referred to as the 'Pastoral Symphony'.

The opening movement ("Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside") uses repetitive motifs, long sustained pedal notes, and simple major harmonies to evoke a sense of peacefulness and stillness, as if on a gentle stroll through the countryside on a summer's day.

The second movement ("Scene by the brook") is perhaps best known for its iconic 'birdcalls' heard from the woodwind at the end of the movement - the nightingale's song in the flute, the chirping of a quail in the oboe, and the cuckoo's call in the clarinet. As suggested by its title, the gentle flow of the brook is heard throughout, with undulating string passages representing a murmuring stream and soft breeze.

The final three movements are played 'attacca' - without pause. The third movement ("Merry gathering of country folk") rather disrupts the serenity of the countryside with the arrival of a raucous and boisterous folk dance. Beethoven adds touches of humour by parodying the somewhat questionable musical talents of a rustic Viennese tavern band, with the oboe's syncopated melody always missing its downbeat, and the bassoon seemingly only able to play two notes!

The jovial and bawdy atmosphere is abruptly interrupted by a fierce thunderstorm as the fourth movement ("Thunder, Storm") begins. Unlike the peaceful major harmonies of the rest of the symphony, this movement is full of

shifting chromaticism and diminished harmonies. Together with the introduction of the timpani, trumpets, and trombone, all sense of calm and stability is blown away by the storm, with climactic lightning strikes in the brass and timpani, and driving rain in the strings.

As the storm abates, rumbles of thunder are heard in the lower strings and timpani, before a serene oboe melody and gentle ascending flute scale lead us into the final movement ("Shepherd's song. Cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm"). An alpine horn call is heard in the clarinet and the horn as the country folk give thanks to God in a majestic hymn celebrating the life-sustaining gifts of nature. In the symphony's manuscript, Beethoven wrote, "We give thee thanks for thy great glory."

Programme notes by Charlotte Evans

Alexandra Caldon

Violin/Director



Alexandra Caldon is a violinist who enjoys a varied career of solo, chamber and orchestral playing. She grew up in Great Hampden studying violin with Peter Hanson before reading music at Selwyn College, Cambridge where she was awarded a first class honours degree. She then attended the Royal Academy of Music as a student of Erich Gruenberg, graduating with distinction. Two years later Alexandra was appointed a member of Britten Sinfonia with whom she has toured the UK and abroad. Highlights with the group have included performing Vivaldi's Autumn from the Four Seasons in the City of London Festival, playing with the orchestra in the BBC Proms, and performing in the Sistine Chapel.

Alexandra also enjoys working with a variety of other ensembles including the London Chamber Orchestra, the CBSO and the London Contemporary Orchestra. She loves leading CantiaQuorum: the ensemble she has founded with her husband in Canterbury. As a keen chamber musician she is a member of the Hampden Quartet as well as performing in a Violin Duo with her sister. She has made several chamber music recordings and also records regularly for television and film.

Peter Sparks

Clarinet



Peter has an exceptionally diverse musical career. He is Principal Clarinet at English National Opera, and regularly performs as guest Principal Clarinet with most of the leading symphony, chamber, ballet and opera orchestras in the UK such as the Royal Opera House, Philharmonia, BBC orchestras with concerts, broadcasts and recordings at home and abroad.

A busy chamber musician, Peter performs and records with a number of different chamber ensembles such as Wigmore Soloists (including Schubert Octet, Beethoven Septet and Brahms Serenade) and London Winds, with whom he frequently broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 and performs in UK venues such as the Wigmore Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, BBC Proms as well as at International Festivals. Peter also performs around the

country as a guest with a number of chamber groups, including Philharmonia Chamber Players, Ensemble 360 and Orsino Ensemble. He has recently recorded 2 discs of jazz-inspired arrangements with the Art Deco Trio with Iain Farrington and Kyle Horch. He is also in demand as a session musician for a variety of TV shows, films and adverts, as well as playing in the West End.

Peter is an accomplished soloist and has performed numerous concertos such as those by Mozart, Debussy, Adams, Finzi, Copland, Weber and both Mendelssohn Konzertstücke including a live BBC Radio 3 broadcast with Michael Collins with whom he has collaborated extensively.

He has premiered many new works and has an affinity for contemporary music. Some commissions include works by Nicola LeFanu and two pieces by Peter Wiegold including a bass clarinet concerto, 'New York', which were premiered in the Park Lane Group series in the Purcell Room. He collaborated with Mira Calix, working on inter-disciplinary improvised music with electronics to silent movies by Hitchcock in the Royal Festival Hall and 'Dead Wedding' puppet show in the Barbican. Most recently, he premiered 'The Light Blinds' for clarinet/bass clarinet and strings by Angela Slater (RPS commission) and premiered/recorded a folk-inspired piece, 'The Platinum Suite', for clarinet/bass clarinet, strings and harp by Seonaid Aitken.

As a visiting teacher, Peter is a Professor at the Royal College of Music. He also recorded the official demonstration tracks for the current ABRSM clarinet syllabus, distributed worldwide.

He is currently touring the production of 'Carnival' with Aurora orchestra. In his spare time, he runs a choir and composes.

The Academy of St Mary-le-Bow

The Academy of St Mary-le-Bow is an orchestra made up of outstanding non-professional musicians, many of whom have studied at leading conservatoires or universities, previously worked as professional players or were part of prestigious organisations such as the National Youth Orchestra. Our mission is to provide players with the opportunity to take part in high-quality orchestral concerts with like-minded musicians. The ensemble performs around six major concerts a year across London and holds a residency at the historic church of St Mary-le-Bow in the City. The ensemble is flexible in size, undertaking projects from chamber music to large-scale symphonic works. Though the ensemble is regularly directed by its Principal Conductor and Artistic Director, Alex Fryer, it also frequently engages guest conductors and guest leaders for unconducted performances.

The Orchestra

Violin I

Alexandra Caldon (director)
Jeremy Weinstein
Alexander Dawkins
Jamie Frost
Tory Sawyer
Ermos Chrysochos
Nicholas Bacon
Freya Stewart

Violin II

Ellen Dunn
Harri Caddick
Chloe Rush
Sophia Goode
Camilla Fletcher
Yosi Mckenzie

Viola

Simon Mckenzie
John Hinchliffe
Edmund Daley
Rachel Lunt

'Cello

Morgan Jones
Natalie Bevan
Laura Oldfield
Jaeho Bae

Double Bass

Hettie Burn
Ben Fosker*

Flute

Andy Martin
Jenny Whitby
Rebecca Pozzuto (picc.)

Oboe

Charlotte Evans
Alex Fryer

Clarinet

James Nobel
Alexander Card

Bassoon

Jamie King*
Zac Moxon

Horn

Myrddin Rees Davies
Tom Allard

Trumpet

Victor Rosi
Kirsty Loosemore

Trombone

Gordon MacLochlan (alto)
Henry Newton (tenor)

Timpani

Sami Alsindi

* Denotes guest

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Joining the Academy of St Mary-le-Bow Friends Scheme costs just £50 a year. All funds go towards the running of the orchestra which allows us to put on an exciting and varied programme of events. In return, Friends receive a number of benefits including:

- Entrance into a prize draw to win free concert tickets
- 2 discounted tickets per concert (if you don't win the draw)
- A free drink per concert
- A special acknowledgement in our programme
- Reserved seating (upon request)

If you're interested in becoming a friend, please visit our website or email friends@academyofstmarylebow.com.

Many thanks to our current friends: Martine Allard, Paul Allard, Ania Bajur and Albert Thommen, Julia Caddick, Neil Collins, Charles Durose, Geraldine Evans, Stephen Fryer, Jackie Fryer, Anne Harvey, Janet High, James and Rachel Minch, Steve and Nandita Nelson, Angela Pozzuto, Tom Walford.

Upcoming Concerts

16 June 2025

7:30pm, St Mary-le-Bow

Yoshimatsu – And Birds Are Still..., Op. 72

Meredith – Tull

Richter – The Four Seasons Recomposed

Conductor: Alex Fryer

Violins: Makoto Nakata, Patrick Bevan and Christopher Hirschman