

23/24



The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble

Thursday, November 2, 2023 • 7:30pm
Jackson Hall, UC Davis

THE SEASON IS PRESENTED BY
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The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble

Tomo Keller, violin	Lynda Houghton, double bass
Harvey De Souza, violin	Timothy Orpen, clarinet
Robert Smissen, viola	Julie Price, bassoon
Richard Harwood, cello	Stephen Sterling, horn

PROGRAM

Chacony in G Minor, Z. 730 (arr. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), 1948, rev.1963)	Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Serenato in vano, FS.68 (1914) Allegro non troppo ma brioso – Un poco adagio – Tempo di marcia	Carl Nielsen (1865-1931)
Octet, Op. 4 (1933) Moderato Allegro scherzoso Andantino Allegro feroce	Howard Ferguson (1908-1999)

INTERMISSION

Septet in E flat, for clarinet, bassoon, horn violin, viola, cello, and bass, Op. 20 (1800) Adagio – Allegro con brio Adagio cantabile Tempo di menuetto Tema con variazioni: Andante Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace Andante con moto alla marcia - Presto	Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)
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PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields' October 2023 US tour is supported by Maria Cardamone and Paul Matthews together with the American Friends of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists, www.davidroweartists.com

PROGRAM NOTES

Chacony in G Minor, Z. 730 (c1680 / 1948 rev. 1963)

HENRY PURCELL,

arr. BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-76)

Born: Westminster, London, England, September 10, 1659;

Died: Westminster, London, November 21, 1695

Henry Purcell was all but born to be an English Court musician. Both his father and uncle were members of the Chapel Royal. He was trained as a chorister there and by the time he was 20, Purcell was organist of Westminster Abbey, adding the Chapel Royal three years later. He also continued to sing, as both countertenor and bass. Thereafter, he produced the main part of his catalog to order: anthems, birthday odes, welcome songs and coronation music for the four monarchs he served. Music for the Restoration theater filled the last five years of a productive life and resulted in incidental music for about 50 plays.

Benjamin Britten was particularly absorbed with the music of his great English predecessor in the 1940s, in the years surrounding the 250th anniversary of Purcell's death. In addition to *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* (based on a short hornpipe from Purcell's incidental music to a singularly gruesome tragedy), he made a performing edition of Purcell's songs, edited Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* and other works, including the Chacony in G minor. He also wrote a Chacony of his own in the last movement of his Second String Quartet. Purcell's Chacony, (an antique English term for the Italian *ciacona* or French *chaconne*) is believed to be an early work, from around 1680, and is among the finest and the most frequently played of his instrumental music. Purcell wrote many chaconnes, traditionally triple-beat dance movements built over an unvarying bass pattern, with attractive variations woven above this foundation. His G minor Chacony could have been composed either as incidental or consort music. Its four instrumental lines, including basso continuo, invite a variety of interpretations, sometimes grave and stately, other times sprightly and dance-like. For his realization of Purcell's score, Benjamin Britten saw it as incidental music "most likely for a tragedy, judging by the serious and severe nature of the music." Either way, the eight-bar ground bass is full of interest and surprising turns throughout its sequence of 18 continuous variations, demonstrating, as Britten put it, "that mixture of clarity, brilliance, tenderness and strangeness which shines out in all Purcell's music."

***Serenato in vano*, for clarinet, bassoon, horn, cello and double bass, FS.68 (1914)**

CARL NIELSEN

Born: Sortelung, Funen, Denmark, June 9, 1865

Died: Copenhagen, October 3, 1931

"It's an odd little work...more curious than amusing or beautiful," was the most probing analysis offered by the Danish press after the earliest performances of Nielsen's *Serenato in vano*. But the Danish composer's 'odd little work', first heard in Copenhagen's

Odd Fellows Mansion (Palaeet) after a preparatory two-week tour through regional Denmark in 1915, has remained Nielsen's most popular chamber work, together with a more ambitious wind quintet. The *Serenata* is a whimsical, humorous piece in the time-honored tradition of the nocturnal serenade in pursuit of love – here, clearly, in vain (*in vano*). Its 'odd' instrumentation came about in May 1914, after the bass player of a group of orchestral musicians asked his composer-friend for a companion piece to the Beethoven Septet for a short tour. Nielsen, recently turned freelance composer after 25 years as orchestral violinist and conductor, obliged within a week, with a short single-movement serenade which he described as "a humorous trifle." The first of its three clearly defined sections introduces a folk-like theme with a few modal twists, which encourages both winds and strings to short, showy rhapsodies, as though warming-up for a serenade to come. This arrives as slower, expressive night music, ranging from the languorous to the ardent, representing Nielsen at his lyrical finest. But the musicians' efforts are in vain. Mission unaccomplished, the band shrug their shoulders and, in the composer's words, "shuffle off home to the strains of a little final march, which they play for their own amusement." The short serenade reveals Nielsen's characteristic blend of down-to-earth straightforwardness and sophisticated understanding of the character of each instrument.

Octet for clarinet, bassoon, horn, string quartet, bass, Op. 4 (1933)

HOWARD FERGUSON

Born: Belfast, N. Ireland, October 21, 1908

Died: Cambridge, England, November 01, 1999

"I can never get over the fact that my mother and father immediately agreed to this startling proposition," recalled Irish composer, pianist, teacher and musicologist Howard Ferguson late in the 91 years of his life. Born in Belfast to a non-musical banking family, the 13-year-old Ferguson was heard in a local competition by London-based adjudicator and pianist Harold Samuel, who sensed a talent seeking guidance. Dispatched to London with his Belfast nanny, Ferguson studied piano privately with Samuel and was schooled for two years at the historic Westminster School before entering the Royal College of Music. Here, Samuel made sure that his student was taught by the best: rigorous training in composition from R. O. Morris and Vaughan Williams, conducting from Malcolm Sargent, and continuing piano lessons from Samuel himself, a well-respected professional pianist. Ferguson rose to the challenge and emerged with both practical and academic skills that were to serve him well throughout a long career. A Violin Sonata (1931) and this Octet (1933) brought attention from both the music community and a publisher. The 25-year-old Ferguson first began the Octet as a clarinet quintet, then reworked the piece as a septet, before Morris cannily suggested he add a second violin part, making it a companion piece to Schubert's Octet.

The clarinet introduces the main theme of the first movement. It is full of compact motifs, each of which will quickly prove to be a touchstone for development and variation throughout the 22-minute span of the four movements. A more relaxed, warmly romantic theme soon appears on the horn, before being taken up by the string quartet foundation of the ensemble. Ferguson skillfully steers clear of

any suggestion of indulgence by immediately increasing the tempo and drawing urgency from the framework of the new theme. He handles the ensemble confidently, balancing surging waves of finely structured eight-part writing with quieter, more transparent moments of reflection. A sure instinct for the craft of composition, with not a note out of place, or unnecessary doubling of part writing, will become a hallmark of his composition in the years to come.

A brisk, mock fanfare opens the second movement and sets the tone for clarinet, followed by bassoon, and then strings to have fun with a scherzoso theme, a close cousin to the main theme of the previous movement. Soon, following the pattern of both traditional sonata and rondo forms, the horn makes light of its first movement theme, sometimes inverting it, with a feeling of tongue-in-cheek never far from the surface of the music. The two themes continue to alternate in this, the shortest of the four movements. The prevailing good humor serves to enhance a feeling of longing and reflection that viola and cello bring to the wistfully sighing theme of the slow movement. Carefully navigating a route around nostalgia, Ferguson increases both tension and tempo before brightening the theme with upper strings and winds. Still, the prevailing mood is subdued, and the movement closes with muted strings and the gentlest of sighs. The robust finale opens with a burst of reminiscences of themes and motifs past, now even more rhythmically driven. The horn's romantic theme is given new life, *con calore*, by viola and cello before being further shared and, eventually, winding down to a whisper. A brief coda ties a bow on this tautly crafted, dexterously balanced octet, Ferguson's opus 4.

Never a prolific writer, Ferguson continued to build a reputation with just 15 more compositions, in both large and small forms. He pursued a parallel career as a recitalist, traveling the world with his duo piano partner Denis Matthews and with violinist Yfrah Neaman. He was assistant to Myra Hess in the running of the hugely influential 1,698 daily wartime concerts from London's National Gallery. He taught composition at the Royal Academy of Music. With the large-scale choral work *The Dream of the Rood* (1958-9), Ferguson felt he had said all he wished to say as a composer. He often told friends that he did not wish to repeat himself in his music. He was in his early Fifties. The remaining 40 years of his life were spent editing highly successful educational editions of keyboard music, bringing together those lifelong practical and academic skills acquired as a direct result of a 1922 competition in Belfast. Howard Ferguson lived long enough to oversee fine digital recordings of his entire catalog.

Septet in E flat, for clarinet, bassoon, horn violin, viola, cello, and bass, Op. 20 (1800)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born: Bonn, Germany, baptized December 17, 1770

Died: Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Beethoven wrote this Septet, the most famous of his chamber works featuring winds, early in the year 1800. It was first performed in the house of Prince Schwarzenberg. Not long afterwards, the public première was given at Beethoven's first benefit concert in Vienna, April 2, 1800. It was the centerpiece of a typically huge program,

including the première of his First Symphony, one of his piano concertos, an improvisation, a Mozart symphony and excerpts from Haydn's *Creation*. Here was Beethoven standing tall, out of the shadow of his mentors, and, by implication, every bit their equal. Beethoven promoted, conducted and played piano at this concert at the Burgtheater. It was a great success, and he is estimated to have been able to live off its proceeds for two years.

The popularity of the Septet has never waned. It was written to please, as a six-movement divertimento. It builds on an estimable tradition where serenades and divertimenti, with the winds customarily playing in pairs, provided background music for weddings, dining and other outdoor entertainments. This was the popular music of its day, undemanding and immediately gratifying. Beethoven's Septet, however, is highly original in its one-to-a-part combination of a trio of winds and quartet of strings. Its palette is similarly far from traditional, with both bassoon and cello climbing well beyond their habitual bass line support, while the bass itself has more of an orchestral rather than a doubling role. The work opens with an introduction which immediately gives notice of the importance of the first violin. Its earliest performer was Ignaz Schuppanzigh, the foremost violinist in Vienna, a musician who would participate in many more Beethoven premières in the years to come. Beethoven probably had Schuppanzigh in mind when he turned the second variation (fourth movement) into a miniature concerto, wrote some virtuoso arpeggios in the scherzo movement, and even included a brilliant cadenza for violin in the finale. The clarinet of noted Austrian Josef Bähr also has time in the limelight, notably in the first two movements. The winds, generally, either function as soloists, or support the strings as a group with a contrasting sonority.

Beethoven takes the theme of the third movement from an earlier G major Piano Sonata, (later published as Op. 49 No. 2), crisping up its rhythm and adding flamboyant little displays from horn and clarinet in its central trio section. The five variations of the fourth movement, on a melody that is likely based on a folk tune, lead into a jaunty Scherzo. The horn sets the mood of this movement, while the cello commands the lyrical trio section. The finale opens, in a moment of tongue-in-cheek humor, with an imposing, slow march in the minor key. But the solemnity is short-lived; the Presto positively exudes *joie de vivre*. The Septet, where shared enjoyment is a hallmark of the musical language, inspired many 19th century large-scale chamber works, by Spohr, Kreutzer, Moscheles, Hummel, Onslow, Berwald and others – none more celebrated than Schubert's great Octet of 1824.

— PROGRAM NOTES © 2023 Keith Horner.

Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble

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Harvey De Souza , violin	Timothy Orpen , clarinet
Robert Smissen , viola	Julie Price , bassoon
Richard Harwood , cello	Stephen Sterling , horn

The **Academy Chamber Ensemble** was formed in 1967, drawing its membership from the world-renowned chamber orchestra the **Academy of St Martin in the Fields**, which was itself founded by **Sir Neville Marriner** in 1958 and is currently led by Music Director **Joshua Bell**. The purpose behind the formation of the Chamber Ensemble was to perform the larger scale chamber music repertoire with players who customarily worked together, instead of the usual string quartet with additional guests. Drawn from the principal players of the orchestra and play-directed by Academy Director / Leader **Tomo Keller**, the Chamber Ensemble now performs in multiple configurations from wind trios to string octets. Its touring commitments are extensive and include regular tours of Europe and North America, whilst recording contracts with Philips Classics, Hyperion, and Chandos have led to the release of over thirty CDs.

The Academy Chamber Ensemble's tours of the United States and Canada are supported by Maria Cardamone and Paul Matthews, together with the American Friends of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. The American Friends was founded in 1998 to support the work of the Academy around the world, particularly in the USA. Find out more at www.asmf.org

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tomo Keller (violin) was born in Stuttgart in 1974 to German-Japanese parents, both of whom were professional pianists. He started playing the violin at the age of six and at ten years old he gave his first performances as a soloist with an orchestra. Tomo studied at Vienna's University for Music and Performing Arts and New York's Juilliard School. Numerous prizes and awards followed, and he has since performed at major concert halls all around the world, including as a soloist with the Beethovenhalle Orchestra Bonn, St Petersburg Camerata, London Symphony Orchestra, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Tomo Keller is a much sought-after orchestral leader, having led the Essen Philharmonic Orchestra (1999–2007), the London Symphony Orchestra (Assistant Leader 2009–2015), the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra (2014-present), and more than 20 orchestras as guest leader. Tomo was appointed Leader of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields in December 2015. Tomo plays a violin by Andrea Guarneri, Cremona 1667, made available to him by the Swedish Järnåker Foundation.

Harvey de Souza (violin) has been a member of the Academy since 1993 and has led the orchestra on tours with Sir Neville Marriner and soloists including Joshua Bell and Julia Fischer. As a member of the Chamber Ensemble he has performed extensively throughout South America, Europe and the USA. Harvey has been a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and a member of the Vellinger String Quartet, who were winners of the 1994 London International String Quartet Competition. He has been Principal Guest Director of the Lancashire Sinfonietta and is co-artistic director of the Sangat Chamber Music Festival, now in its seventeenth year in Mumbai. Harvey plays on a Carlo Bergonzi, kindly lent to him by the Beare's International Violin Society.

Robert Smissen (viola) won a scholarship to Chethams School of Music at the age of 14 and went on to study at the Guildhall School of Music with David Takeno. While there he won prizes for chamber music and solo playing. After college he was appointed principal viola with the Northern Sinfonia, a post he held until 1986. He currently plays with the Academy, as well as other London chamber orchestras.

Richard Harwood (cello) has performed concerti and chamber music in major venues including London's Royal Albert Hall, Southbank Centre, Wigmore Hall, Musikverein (Vienna), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Alte Oper (Frankfurt), Thomaskirche (Leipzig), Auditorium du Louvre (Paris) and Alice Tully Hall / Lincoln Center (New York). Richard was cellist of the Sitkovetsky Trio from 2014–2016. He is regularly heard on BBC, having made his BBC Radio 3 debut at the age of thirteen with a live recording of the Elgar Concerto. He has also given live performances on other radio networks including Classic FM, Radio France, MDR, RTÉ and Radio New Zealand. Richard was appointed principal cellist of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the beginning of 2018. He has also been a principal of the John Wilson Orchestra, and guest principal at the London Symphony and RTÉ Concert orchestras. He plays a 'cello by Francesco Rugeri, dated 1692.

Lynda Houghton (double bass) is Principal Double Bass with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and has been playing with the orchestra for over 25 years. Having studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London and at the Banff Centre for Fine Arts in Canada, she rapidly established a reputation as a talented exponent of contemporary music. Invited to play with the London Symphony Orchestra - the first female bassist in that orchestra - Lynda enjoys playing with a number of chamber orchestras, including as Principal Bass in the City of London Sinfonia and Orchestra of St. John's, and as a guest in many other ensembles including the Nash Ensemble and Fibbonacci.

Timothy Orpen (clarinet) joined the Royal Scottish National Orchestra as principal clarinet in 2020, following five years as principal of the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Timothy is also a founder member and principal of the Aurora Orchestra, with whom he continues to perform regularly. As a chamber musician Timothy has performed across the Far East, USA, Australia and Europe with artists including Lars Vogt, Anthony Marwood, Melvyn Tan and Pascal Rogé. He has also collaborated with the Klezmer group She'koyokh and given many world premieres, including pieces written for him by Luke Styles, Graham Ross and Aaron Holloway-Nahum. As a guest principal Timothy has performed with all the major London orchestras. After spending his early years in Australia he studied at the Royal Academy in London and the Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe, Germany. In his spare time Timothy enjoys exploring the Scottish hills, and he also has climbed 6000-metre mountains in the Andes and Himalayas.

Julie Price (bassoon) has held Principal Bassoon positions with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. She is now Principal Bassoonist of the English Chamber Orchestra and Co-Principal of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. She studied with Edward Warren and William Waterhouse whilst at Manchester University and the Royal Northern College of Music and later with Roger Birnstingl in Geneva. She has been a Professor of Bassoon at the Royal College of Music in London for many years and often gives classes there and at other institutions. Aside her orchestral career she regularly appears as a chamber musician and as a soloist.

Stephen Stirling (horn) is a renowned soloist who has appeared at almost every major British venue and with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, BBC NOW, BBC SSO, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of St John's. He has a world-wide reputation as a chamber musician, in constant demand at festivals in the UK and abroad, as well as being a founder member of Endymion, The Fibonacci Sequence, the Audley Trio, Arpège, and the New London Chamber Ensemble. Principal of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and the City of London Sinfonia, Guest Principal Horn with the Capella Andrea Barca, Orquestra de Cadaques and Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and a Guest Principal of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Stephen is privileged to have worked with many of the world's finest chamber orchestras.

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And 8 donors who prefer to remain anonymous



A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESENTING SPONSOR, NANCY FISHER:

“The Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts represents an important lifestyle that defines the Davis Community. I am so impressed with the talented and versatile programs they bring to our community from all over the world that create truly exciting performances.

I am so grateful to give back through ‘The Nancy and Hank Fisher Family Fund.’ Please join me in attending the many programs of your choice and making your own financial gift supporting our treasured performing arts center. Thank you.”

- Nancy Fisher

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To learn about planned giving opportunities, please contact Liz King, 530.752.0563.

ARTISTIC VENTURES FUND

We applaud our Artistic Ventures Fund members, whose major gift commitments support artist engagement fees, innovative artist commissions, artist residencies, and programs made available free to the public.

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* Friends of Mondavi Center †Mondavi Center Advisory Board Member °In Memoriam

Mondavi Center UC DAVIS



Barbara K. Jackson Rising Stars of Opera
UC Davis Symphony Orchestra and
singers from the San Francisco Opera Center
Feb 4, 2024

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Mondavi Center members receive exclusive season-long benefits that help enhance their enjoyment of the arts.

*For more information, visit mondaviarts.org/support-us or call **530.752.8452***