



## ACADEMY OF ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

**Andrew Watkinson** violin and guest leader

**Harvey de Souza** violin

**Jennifer Godson** violin

**Martin Burgess** violin

**Robert Smissen** viola

**Duncan Ferguson** viola

**Stephen Orton** cello

**John Heley** cello

The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields was formed in 1959 by a group of eleven enthusiastic musicians with the aim of performing in public without a conductor. Their first three recordings led to a succession of long-term contracts, and the Academy quickly took their place among the most recorded ensembles in history. As the repertoire expanded from Baroque to Mozart, Bartok and Beethoven, so it became necessary for the principal violin, Neville Marriner, to conduct the larger orchestra.

The Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble was created in 1967 to perform the larger chamber works—from quintets to octets—with players who customarily work together, instead of the usual string quartet with additional guests. Drawn from the principal players of the orchestra, the Chamber Ensemble tours as a string octet, string sextet, and in other configurations including winds. Its touring commitments are extensive, with annual visits to France, Germany, and Spain, and frequent tours to North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan.

The Ensemble's fall, 2009 North American tour brought them to 10 cities including Montreal, College Park, Edmonton, Santa Fe, Carmel, and Santa Monica, CA.

Contracts with Philips Classics, Hyperion, and Chandos have led to the release of over thirty CDs by the Chamber Ensemble.

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## **Individual member bios**

**Andrew Watkinson** (violin, guest leader) hails from Glasgow. He studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School for four years, and also in Switzerland and Leningrad. His many teachers included Frederick Grinke, Joseph Szigeti, Franco Gulli and Yfrah Neaman. Andrew is first violinist of the renowned Endellion String Quartet, which is in residence at Cambridge University. In its 30 years the quartet has given well over 2,000 concerts worldwide, and its recording the Beethoven quartets Warner Classics has recently been released to critical acclaim. As a soloist he has appeared with many of the British orchestras and performed in Germany, Holland, Israel, France and South America. For many years he was leader and director of the City of London Sinfonia, giving concerts in Britain and touring widely. He has also been a time a regular guest leader and director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, and continues to be invited to guest direct orchestras in Britain as well as in countries such as Italy, Denmark and Spain.

**Harvey de Souza** (violin) is a native of Bombay, India, and began musical studies at the age of four with his father. He was awarded a scholarship to attend the Yehudi Menuhin School in England, where he studied with Mr. Menuhin, Felix Andrievsky, and Margaret Norris. He subsequently studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Jascha Brodsky and Felix Galamir. He has performed extensively throughout Europe, the U.S., China, and India, and has participated in numerous festivals including Salzburg, Sienna, Gstaad, and Prussia Cove. He was a member of the Vellinger String Quartet from 1993-1999, and since 1993 has been a member of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields.

**Jennifer Godson** (violin) has been a member of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields since 1985. She is also principal second violin of the London Mozart Players and co-leader of John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique. much of her musical life has revolved around chamber music and she was a member of the Fairfield String Quartet from 1978-88, performing and broadcasting throughout the UK and Europe.

**Martin Burgess** (violin) has Played with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields since 1992, and recently made his debut as guest director. He studied with Emanuel Hurwitz and the Amadeus Quartet. Away from the Academy, Martin leads the Emperor String Quartet, which won 1st Prize at the 1995 Evian International String Quartet Competition and was recently nominated for a Grammy Award in the USA for their CD of the Quartets of William Walton.

**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 of St. Martin in the Fields, as well as other London chamber orchestras.

**Duncan Ferguson** (viola) was born in Scotland, and won a scholarship for post-graduate study at the Royal Academy of Music after receiving his diploma from the Royal Scottish Academy in 1992. Primarily known as a chamber musician he is a multiple prize-winner for both solo performance and with the celebrated Medea Quartet with whom he played for five years. Duncan has been playing with the Academy since 1996 and acts as guest principal for many other orchestras including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra.

**Stephen Orton** (cello) was born in Ripon, Yorkshire. He won a scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music to study with William Pleeth. He has been principal cello in the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and assistant principal in the English Chamber Orchestra, and has performed as soloist with both ensembles. He was a member of the Delme Quartet for 10 years, and joined the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields as principal cellist in 1986.

**John Heley** (cello) was born in London, and began playing cello at the age of six. He was awarded a scholarship to study with William Pleeth, and continued studies with Mr. Pleeth at the Guildhall School of Music where he won numerous prizes. In 1980 he left the post of associate principal cellist with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra to concentrate on freelance work, which included recordings with guitarist John Williams. In 1986 he became associate principal cellist with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields.

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