



Refiner's Fire

The Academy of Ancient Music and the Historical Performance Revolution

Richard Bratby

A history of the Academy of Ancient Music, one of the world's foremost period-instrument orchestras, celebrating their 50th anniversary year.

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Using first-hand testimony from artists, critics, collaborators and supporters, Richard Bratby brings the history of this trailblazing orchestra to life, from its early days to its contemporary achievements.

Founded in 1973 by Cambridge harpsichordist Christopher Hogwood and record producer Peter Wadland, AAM quickly achieved global fame by lifting period instrument performance from the fringes of 1960s counterculture and putting baroque music into the pop charts. However, as the classical record industry faded and 1970s radicals became the 1990s establishment, the AAM faced a new challenge: reinventing itself to meet the artistic, social, and economic conditions of a musical world transformed by its own revolutionary achievement.

Fifty years after its foundation, it's time to assess the full, trailblazing impact of the Academy of Ancient Music. Author Richard Bratby comments: *"Writing the history of such an unusual orchestra presented challenges beyond the purely practical difficulties of using archives during a pandemic. As the Academy celebrates its fiftieth anniversary, it has accrued a rich and complex history as well as an unrivalled discography. The book draws on interviews with a wide range of individuals who played a role in the foundation and progress of the AAM, including Dame Emma Kirkby, Sir Roger Norrington and the late James Bowman CBE. The result – as far as we know - is the first full-length history of a British period instrument orchestra."*

Richard Bratby is a former AAM Hogwood Fellow and a writer, critic, and broadcaster. He has written for *The Spectator*, *Gramophone*, *The Critic* and *BBC Music Magazine*, among other publications.

Academy of Ancient Music (AAM) is an orchestra with a worldwide reputation for excellence in baroque and classical music, using historically informed techniques and period-specific instruments. Established 50 years ago, AAM has released more than 300 albums to date, collecting countless accolades including Classic BRIT, Gramophone and Edison awards. They are the most listened-to period-instrument orchestra online, with over one million monthly listeners on streaming platforms.

AAM celebrates the orchestra's Golden Anniversary in 2023-24 with the completion of a landmark project to record Mozart's complete works for keyboard and orchestra, the publication of this new book by Richard Bratby, and celebratory performances across the UK and internationally.

www.aam.co.uk

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