

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 17, 2018

## **EMV and the VSO present** **New York Polyphony as part of the Annual New Music Festival**

***Grammy Nominated Ensemble performs the Tallis Mass for Four Voices and Gregory Brown's "Missa Charles Darwin"***

**Vancouver, BC – Early Music Vancouver (EMV)** is proud to collaborate with the VSO for the third year in a row as part of their annual New Music Festival. This year's programme features the twice Grammy-nominated vocal quartet New York Polyphony and is titled "**New Music for Old Instruments: Thomas Tallis and Missa Charles Darwin**". The concert takes place on **January 16, 2019 at 7:30pm at Christ Church Cathedral** in downtown Vancouver.

This extraordinary programme juxtaposes ancient and modern repertoire and explores the concepts of Faith and Reason by pairing Renaissance composer Thomas Tallis's *Mass for Four Voices*, with Gregory Brown's mass, *Missa Charles Darwin*. Like Tallis's mass, *Missa Charles Darwin* uses the five-movement structure of a Catholic mass but subverts the genre by replacing the sacred texts with lines taken from Charles Darwin's surprisingly poetic magnum opus "On the Origin of the Species". Brown's mass served as a source of inspiration for his brother, author Dan Brown of the blockbuster "Da Vinci Code", whose latest book "Origins" is the fifth installment in his Robert Langdon series.

"For composers of vocal music, the mass is a mountain that must be climbed. For me, as a non-believer, that posed a daunting challenge: how do I work within this medium while being true to my beliefs?" questions Brown. "When New York Polyphony member Craig Phillips approached me with this idea of melding the mass structure with the texts of Charles Darwin, I was intrigued. It seemed like a way for me to express love and respect for the music, and for the form, while also expressing how I feel about life, the spirit, the interconnectedness of nature and my admiration for one of humankind's great minds: Charles Darwin."

*Missa* is simply the Latin form of the word Mass and refers to the texts and music of the Roman Catholic liturgy. This liturgy has an established structure and in general terms is associated with a public celebration of faith. Naturalist Charles Darwin's name forms the latter part of the title due to the fact that the bulk of the texts used in this mass are taken from his writings of Charles Darwin, particularly the seminal *Origin of Species*. The musical and liturgical form of the Mass is distinct and canonic, with intrinsic proportions, structure, and drama. Casting Darwin's texts into that form is a way of drawing parallels, and exploring contrasts between the two, as in the *Kyrie*. The central message of the *Kyrie* is one of supplication and mercy, while Darwin's natural selection is inherently lacking in mercy. This format is also a way to venerate Darwin and his legacy in a form that is associated with the public celebration of belief.

Brown and New York Polyphony have enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship. Brown wrote his first piece for the ensemble in 2010 and most recently they toured Germany together performing and speaking about *Missa Charles Darwin*. On one stop of the tour Brown had the privilege of giving introductory remarks alongside Charles Darwin's great-great-grand-daughter, Sarah Darwin.

New York Polyphony is one of North America's only vocal ensembles specializing in renaissance polyphony and contemporary music that is regularly invited by most of the top European festivals. Their growing discography includes two GRAMMY-nominated releases and albums that have topped the "best of" lists of The New Yorker, Gramophone, and BBC Music Magazine. The New Yorker has described them as "singers of superb musicianship and vocal allure".

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“It’s always a joy to share the stage with New York Polyphony and especially to hear them make music live and up close,” says Brown. “They always bring a high level of artistry and imagination to my work and they often teach me about my own music through their insightful interpretations”.

Composer Gregory Brown is coming to Vancouver for this performance, and the concert will be preceded by a discussion between him and Professor Christopher Douglas, the acting director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria, about issues arising from this unique coming-together of faith and reason through music.

### **ABOUT NEW YORK POLYPHONY ([newyorkpolyphony.com](http://newyorkpolyphony.com))**

Praised for a “rich, natural sound that’s larger and more complex than the sum of its parts,” (National Public Radio) New York Polyphony is one of the foremost vocal chamber ensembles active today. The four men, “singers of superb musicianship and vocal allure,” (*The New Yorker*) give vibrant, modern voice to repertoire ranging from Gregorian chant to cutting-edge compositions. Their dedication to innovative programming, as well as a focus on rare and rediscovered Renaissance and medieval works, has not only earned New York Polyphony two GRAMMY nominations and wide acclaim, but also helped to move early music into the classical mainstream.

### **ABOUT EARLY MUSIC VANCOUVER ([earlymusic.bc.ca](http://earlymusic.bc.ca))**

For close to 50 years, Early Music Vancouver (EMV) has dedicated itself to fostering an understanding and appreciation of musical treasures from the Renaissance, Baroque, and Classical periods. Under the leadership of Executive and Artistic Director Matthew White EMV continues to garner international acclaim as the largest presenter of early music in Canada, and as one of the most active and innovative organizations in its field in North America. EMV is proud of its educational outreach initiatives that include its popular annual summer festival at UBC’s School of Music; a new Baroque Mentorship Orchestra; community lectures; and instrument instruction and preservation.

### **LISTING INFORMATION**

#### **EMV presents *New Music for Old Instruments: Thomas Tallis and Missa Charles Darwin***

Date:	Wednesday, January 16, 2019 at 7:30pm
Pre-Concert Talk:	6:45pm with Gregory Brown, composer, and Professor Christopher Douglas, acting director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria
Address:	Christ Church Cathedral 690 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC V6C 2L1
Ticket prices:	From \$18
Box Office:	<a href="http://earlymusic.bc.ca">earlymusic.bc.ca</a> or 604-822-2697
Website:	<a href="http://earlymusic.bc.ca">earlymusic.bc.ca</a>

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