

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 23, 2020

All Aboard! EMV Presents Sea Songs & Shanties with Vancouver's Chor Leoni Men's Choir and Montreal's Ensemble La Nef

Explore the maritime music of the 16th to 18th centuries featured on Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed

Vancouver, BC – On **Saturday February 22 at 7:30PM** at the **Chan Centre for the Performing Arts**, EMV presents ***Sea Songs & Shanties feat. Ensemble La Nef & Chor Leoni***. Join the musicians and vocal soloists of these two acclaimed Canadian ensembles as they explore music of the sea with capstan shanties, halyard shanties, laments, forecastle songs, and short haul shanties. Inspired by a tradition of English maritime music going back to the 16th century, this is an opportunity to hear the rich songs that accompanied a sailor's work and play. Seán Dagher, La Nef's musical director, has created modern arrangements of these songs to display all the warmth and depth they deserve. These will be paired with selections sung by the men of Chor Leoni led by their artistic director, conductor Erick Lichte.

"What I love about this music is the inclusiveness," explains Dagher. "Sea songs and shanties didn't start out as music to be heard. They were songs to be sung, songs to help with the work, songs to pass the time together. It's a collaborative effort that builds teamwork. So, when we're performing these songs, it's not just for an audience — it's also for each other. It was no small challenge to drag these pieces, tar-stained and tattered, into the concert hall. We achieved this by letting our musical instincts take us in whatever direction the songs seemed to be pointing. We have harmonized and arranged and re-harmonized and re-arranged all of these songs into the pieces that we ourselves would want to hear."

The main source of the music comes from Stan Hugill's *Shanties by the Seven Seas*. This collection contains more than 400 sea songs as well as important historical context explaining the origins and function of each song. The repertoire for this programme is drawn from all over the world including England, Scotland, Ireland, Estonia, the Americas and the Caribbean.

This project began as a soundtrack for the wildly popular video game Assassin's Creed III and its sequels Black Flag and Rogue. La Nef was hired to perform on the initial soundtrack in 2012 for Ubisoft Entertainment.

"We were initially hired to create a soundtrack for Assassin's Creed that sounded like uneducated pirates," laughs Dagher. "Whenever we added anything nice, like even adding simple harmonies, the producer reminded us we needed to sound bad! Though we understood and delivered, it was frustrating because much of the music called out for so much more. In 2014, subsequent to the enormous success of the soundtrack, we all decided to get together again and reimagine these songs as we wanted to hear them and in arrangements we knew would be fun for a live audience. We have been touring the programme ever since."

This first-time collaboration with Chor Leoni gives La Nef the opportunity to take this longer-term musical voyage farther than before. Dagher and Lichte agreed that a collaboration with a men's choir was the perfect instrument to bolster and complement La Nef's original crew and that it made sense to also include some music for the choir to sing alone. Among the selections that Chor Leoni will sing are *Jonah's Song*, by P.D.Q. Bach's "real-life" counterpart, Peter Schickele which sets a hymn text written by Herman Melville in his 1851 novel *Moby-Dick* and *Incantatio Maris Aestuosi* (Incantation for a Stormy Sea), a tour-de-force work for male choir by the great Estonian composer Veljo Tormis. Chor Leoni will also join La Nef in several new arrangements of some of the original pieces that have been re-imagined for this joint ensemble. With over 60 members singing in the choir, Dagher took the opportunity to re-arrange more of the nautical tunes to suit the robust sound and added textures of a full choir.

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ABOUT EARLY MUSIC VANCOUVER (earlymusic.bc.ca)

For 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. Currently under the leadership of Matthew White – renowned countertenor and founding director of the Québec-based ensemble *Les Voix Baroques* – 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.

ABOUT CHOR LEONI (<https://chorleoni.org>)

Chor Leoni Men's Choir is one of the most active amateur ensembles in North America and performs more than 35 concerts a season to over 15,000 patrons. For over 25 years, Vancouver's acclaimed Chor Leoni has been championing new music and has commissioned hundreds of pieces for male choir, ranging from pop and folksong arrangements to modern works. In 2019 the ensemble received the Margaret Hillis Award for Choral Excellence from the professional choral organization, Chorus America.

ABOUT LA NEF

La Nef is dedicated to the creation and production of early and contemporary music. It produces concerts and recitals of early and traditional music that are based on historical and literary themes. In 2001, La Nef broadened its field of action by launching a sector dedicated to contemporary music; a sector, that is, dedicated to the creation, research, and development of new forms. The company alternates projects that are essentially musical with theatrical projects that involve multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, multimedia, and operatic elements. Music Director Seán Dagher is an active performer, arranger, and composer of music from various folk and classical music traditions: Celtic, Baroque, Medieval, Arabic, French-Canadian, and Maritime. He is artistic director of Skye Consort and its principal arranger and often provides arrangements for other ensembles, including Les Voix Humaines. He has been nominated for numerous Adisq awards and participated in the Adisq-winning CD, *La Traverse Miraculeuse* with La Nef and Les Charbonniers de l'enfer.

LISTING INFORMATION

EMV presents *Sea Songs & Shanties* feat. Ensemble La Nef & Chor Leoni

Date:	Saturday, February 22 7:30PM at the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts
Address:	Chan Centre for the Performing Arts 6265 Crescent Road, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1
Ticket prices:	From \$18
Box Office:	earlymusic.bc.ca or 604-822-2697
Website:	earlymusic.bc.ca

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