

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 5, 2016

EARLY MUSIC VANCOUVER

Artistic Director Matthew White

**Early Music Vancouver Explores Extraordinary Figure
of Cultural and Racial History in
– *Le Mozart Noir* –**

***Celebrating Black History Month, EMV presents work by Chevalier de Saint-Georges:
The first star classical composer of African ancestry***

Vancouver, BC – Early Music Vancouver (EMV), embarks on another Northwest Baroque Masterworks project in collaboration with the Pacific Baroque Orchestra (PBO), the Seattle Baroque Orchestra, Portland Baroque Orchestra, and the Early Music Society of the Islands to present ***Le Mozart Noir: Symphonies by Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Mozart & Haydn at the Vancouver Playhouse, February 4, 2017 at 8pm***. An almost forgotten figure in musical history, Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier Saint-Georges was the son of a slave who overcame adversities of class, race, and prejudice to become a major musical star across 18th century Europe. Works by Mozart and Haydn share the programme to illuminate parallels in quality, concept and complexity in Saint-Georges' work.

“Saint-Georges was an inspired mind whose personal story and compositions are relatively unknown,” says Matthew White, Artistic Director of EMV. “In his extraordinary lifetime, he dazzled Parisian society and was praised as ‘Le Mozart Noir’ and yet, two hundred years later, his music does not get the recognition it deserves. In honour of Black History Month, we hope audiences will be thrilled to discover these exquisite works – and that the obvious quality of Saint-Georges’ music will provoke questions about why his music is not played more often.”

Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745 – 1799) was a champion fencer, virtuoso violinist, accomplished composer, and conductor of the leading orchestra in Paris. Born in Guadeloupe to a wealthy plantation owner and one of his African slaves, Saint-Georges was recognized by his father, receiving the family name and the best possible education.

When Saint-Georges was 14 years old, the family returned from the colonies to Paris, where he then spent six years at La Boëssière’s Royal Academy of Arms, beginning a trajectory that would establish him not just as the leading violinist of his time but as a champion fencer throughout Europe, and as a respected military commander in the Revolution.

Saint-Georges received the highest tributes and accolades from the greatest composers of the era and assumed leadership of the revered ‘Concert des Amateurs’ orchestra in 1773. In 1775, he was even considered for the position of Music Director at Paris Opéra, but failed to receive it after several leading ladies petitioned Marie Antoinette, stating “their honour... and conscience made it impossible for them to be subjected to the orders of a mulatto.”

Sadly, Saint-Georges had to abandon his musical career with the advent of the French Revolution but his extraordinary life continued as he led a 100-strong troop of Black soldiers who fought for equality for all men.

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The Vancouver Playhouse programme will feature two sets of concerti by Saint-Georges, a concerto by Leclair, and symphonies by Mozart and Haydn. The Haydn composition is one of the Paris Symphonies (Number 85 “La Reine”), which Saint-Georges himself directed at its 1787 world premiere. Special guest and revered violinist Monica Huggett will join PBO as soloist for two of the concerti.

Prior to the concert, Early Music Vancouver will host a free, open-to-the-public screening of a Canadian-made documentary on Saint-George’s life, featuring Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, at 6:30pm.

ABOUT EARLY MUSIC VANCOUVER (earlymusic.bc.ca)

For more than 45 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.

LISTING INFORMATION

**Early Music Vancouver presents:
*Le Mozart Noir: Symphonies by Chevalier Saint-Georges, Mozart & Haydn***

Date: Saturday February 4, 2017 at 8pm

Pre-Concert Screening: CBC Documentary: Le Mozart Noir
Saturday February 4, 2017 at 6:30pm
Free & Open to the Public

Address: Vancouver Playhouse
600 Hamilton Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 2P1

Ticket prices: From \$18.00

Box Office: earlymusic.bc.ca or 604-822-2697

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For further media information, contact
Sarah Ghosh T: 604.558.2400 ext. 508 C: 604.346.3774
sghosh@mpmgarts.com

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