

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 11, 2017

Early Music Vancouver Presents J.S. Bach's **– St. John Passion –**

Vancouver Bach Festival Comes to a Stirring Finale with Monumental Work

Vancouver, BC – Early Music Vancouver (EMV) is proud to present the headline event of its 2017 Vancouver Bach Festival: ***St. John Passion*** on **August 11, 7:30pm** at the **Chan Centre for Performing Arts**. Esteemed conductor **Alexander Weimann** leads this performance, which will feature a cast of internationally recognized Bach vocal specialists, joined by the **Vancouver Cantata Singers** and the **Pacific Baroque Orchestra**, for a dramatic reading of one of the greatest works in the classical repertoire.

“From the very first bars of the *St. John Passion*, listeners are taken on a thrilling journey filled with an urgency, variety, and intensity that is unmatched in the history of sacred music,” says Matthew White, Executive and Artistic Director of EMV. “With its sweeping narrative, dramatic solos, and powerful chorales, this piece is the closest Bach ever came to writing an opera. It is absolutely riveting, life-changing music.”

The *St. John Passion* was written during Bach's first year as director of music at the famed Thomasschule in Leipzig. It was an opportunity for him to apply his signature brilliance to the tradition of composing oratorios to tell the Passion story. Most of the text was taken from Chapters 18 and 19 of the Gospel of John in Martin Luther's testament of the Bible, as well as from poetry by Barthold Heinrich Brockes (1680-1747). Performed during a three-hour service on Good Friday, these passion oratorios did not stand alone, but were included as integral aspects of the much larger liturgical event. These services would also have contained prayers, chorales, motets, organ improvisations, and a sermon placed between the two parts of the musical performance.

Bach's setting of the *St. John Passion*, like his composition of the *St. Matthew Passion*, fell into obscurity after Bach's death in 1750. Since Mendelssohn revived these works in 1822, however, they have become cornerstones of the classical music repertoire, performed by choral societies, symphony orchestras, and specialist early music groups all over the world.

EMV's highly anticipated presentation of *St. John Passion* will feature several internationally recognized Bach vocal specialists who are all core members of the Swiss ensemble Gli Angeli Genève: **Jenny Högström** (soprano), **Aleksandra Lewandowska** (soprano), **Alex Potter** (counter-tenor), **Robert Getchell**, (tenor), **Stephan MacLeod** (bass-baritone), and **Sumner Thompson** (baritone). Additionally, English tenor, **Thomas Hobbs**, one of the leading Bach evangelists of our time, will take the part of the Narrator. The **Vancouver Cantata Singers**, who are celebrating their 60th season this year under the direction of Artistic Director Paula Kremer, will also add their vocal talents to this enthralling performance.

The all-star vocalists will be backed by Vancouver's own Juno-nominated Pacific Baroque Orchestra (PBO), led under the baton of acclaimed Music Director Alexander Weimann. Formed in 1990, the PBO is recognized as one of Canada's most exciting and innovative ensembles that brings the music of the past up to date by performing with cutting-edge style and enthusiasm. Maestro Weimann, who has a long history with *St. John Passion* and most recently recorded this work with Les Voix Baroques for Atma Classique, will

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lead these combined forces at the Chan Centre in what promises to be a dramatic and captivating finale of the 2017 Vancouver Bach Festival.

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:
*St. John Passion***

Date: Friday, August 11 at 7:30pm
(Pre-Concert Talk at 6:45pm with Matthew White and Alexander Weimann)

Address: Chan Shun Concert Hall
Chan Centre for Performing Arts
6265 Crescent Rd., Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

Ticket prices: From \$18.00

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

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