

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 28, 2019

EMV celebrates the holidays with
Festive Cantatas: Christmas in Gabrieli's Venice

Music Director and star cornettist Bruce Dickey leads 2019 edition of the annual holiday tradition

Vancouver, BC – EMV presents ***Festive Cantatas: Christmas in Gabrieli's Venice*** on **Sunday December 22 at 3:00PM at the Chan Centre for Performing Arts**. This production of joyous and rarely heard 17th century Venetian music for voices, strings and early winds will be led by celebrated cornetto player and musical director, Bruce Dickey, along with eight soloists drawn from across North America and a dozen instrumentalists playing on original instruments. Soloists include sopranos Arwen Myers and Danielle Sampson, altos Vicki St.Pierre and Nicholas Burns, tenors Ross Hauck and Colin Balzer, baritone Sumner Thompson and bass Martin Auclair.

“I love this music so much because of the way it combines voices and instruments as equals, with both equally expressing the text,” explains Dickey. “The sound of the soft but resonant brass instruments give body and substance to the voices, and the voices give life and speech to the instruments. There is also a great sense of space in this music, with the voices responding to each other and engaging in a dialogue. It all combines with the shimmering texture created by the constantly shifting instrumentations and the virtuosic ornamentation of the violins and the cornetti.”

The music for this concert would have been heard in churches throughout Venice during the Christmas season and was written by three musicians closely tied to St. Mark's Basilica: Giovanni Bassano, Andrea Gabrieli and, above-all, Andrea's masterful nephew, Giovanni Gabrieli.

In the 17th century, Venice was a very cosmopolitan city and something of a musical crossroads. Much of the city's musical activity centered around St. Mark's Cathedral, which had long attracted many great musicians. **Giovanni Bassano** was a skilled composer in many genres, including grand polychoral sacred music. He was also a virtuoso of the cornetto, serving as director of the instrumental band at St. Mark's for many years, until his death in 1617.

In 1566, **Andrea Gabrieli** was chosen for the post of organist at St. Mark's, one of the most prestigious musical posts in Italy. A prolific and versatile composer, he wrote over a hundred motets and madrigals and a large body of work for St. Mark's. He cemented his musical legacy largely through his nephew Giovanni Gabrieli, who posthumously published much of his work.

Giovanni Gabrieli succeeded his uncle as principal organist of St. Mark's after Andrea's death in 1585 and held the position until his own death in 1612. Gabrieli is considered the greatest composer of the Venetian High Renaissance. He was the first composer to elevate the genres of canzona and sonata to an artistic level equal to the best vocal music of the age. While full of virtuosic special effects, the truly revolutionary element of his instrumental music is not the specific devices he employed, but the astonishing quality that it consistently attains.

“Some might enjoy the religious connection to the music, but for many of us, it is the music itself and how

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powerfully it speaks to us,” says Dickey. “You can imagine the pomp and power of the Venetian state and the mosaic covered vaults of St. Mark’s. But most of all, you can feel the dazzling festive feeling of the music.”

Dickey is one of the world’s top cornetto players and a leading specialist in music of the late Renaissance and Early Baroque. Since the 1970s he has dedicated himself to reviving the sounds of cornetto which had all but disappeared by the early 19th century. Having now taught for over 35 years, Bruce and his many students, through their research and performances, have helped to consolidate and re-elevate the status of the cornetto to its rightful place in the history of music. An acknowledged virtuoso, BBC Music has proclaimed that Dickey’s playing “would charm the skin off a snake.” Throughout his career as a performer, he has worked as a key collaborator with musical leaders including Ton Koopman, Philippe Herreweghe, John Eliot Gardiner, Jordi Savall, Monica Huggett, Nikolaus Harnoncourt and many others. His extraordinary work can be heard on over 200 recordings.

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.

LISTING INFORMATION

EMV presents *Festive Cantatas: Christmas in Gabrieli’s Venice*

Date: Sunday, December 22, 2019 at 3:00PM

Pre-Concert Talk: 2:15PM with Bruce Dickey, hosted by EMV’s Executive & Artistic Director Matthew White at the Royal Bank Cinema

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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