

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Record-Breaking EMV Season Culminates in 50th Anniversary Gala & Celebration of Beethoven's 250th Birthday

Organization's Largest-Ever Concert Showcases Pacific Baroque Orchestra, Vancouver Cantata Singers, Vancouver Bach Choir, & Vancouver Chamber Choir

Vancouver, BC — Early Music Vancouver (EMV) proudly hosts its **50th Anniversary Gala**, featuring the music of **Beethoven, Mozart, & Haydn**, on **April 5, 2020 at 3pm** at the **Chan Centre for the Performing Arts**. The concert marks the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, the 50th anniversary of EMV, and the 30th anniversary of the Pacific Baroque Orchestra (PBO). Acclaimed Music Director Alexander Weimann will lead the PBO in dazzling performances of **Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*** and **Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G Minor***. The PBO will then be joined by the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Vancouver Cantata Singers, and the Vancouver Bach Choir for a magnificent finale featuring the ***Gloria*** from **Haydn's *Creation Mass***.

Hosted by Sheryl MacKay of CBC Radio's North by Northwest, this concert features the largest period instrument performance ever assembled in Vancouver — demonstrating the extent to which the regional early music scene has grown and flourished on the West Coast in recent years.

"It's not often that EMV has the opportunity to celebrate so many wonderful milestones at once. To honour this special occasion, we have invited more than 175 artists to perform large-scale masterworks by three of history's greatest composers of the classical period," says EMV's Executive and Artistic Director Matthew White. "Audiences can expect some exciting differences in how this early symphonic repertoire is experienced when played on period instruments. They will be surprised to hear more clarity and distinction in the individual parts, as well as more transparent and rhythmic dynamism as these original instruments are stretched to their absolute limits. As EMV looks to the future, this large-scale repertoire reaffirms the next stage in our evolution, and our commitment to presenting audiences with engaging and historically informed period performances."

The celebratory event is an attempt to recreate some of the excitement surrounding the debut of Beethoven's first symphony on April 2, 1800 at the Royal Imperial Court Theatre in Vienna. In homage to the original makeup of the programme, this concert will also include a Mozart symphony and an excerpt from a major work by Haydn. Beethoven's symphony was immediately acclaimed as a testament to the composer's groundbreaking genius, and set the stage for the rapid evolution of symphonic composition.

EMV's gala concert begins with esteemed conductor Alexander Weimann leading 35 musicians of the PBO in a performance of **Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1***. The use of PBO's historical instruments, which are similar to those that Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn would have known, have a dramatic effect on how this music is experienced, for both musicians and audiences. Those used to hearing these well-known pieces played by a modern symphony orchestra will be thrilled to hear how different they sound when performed on period instruments.

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*, which is often compared to the symphonic works of his immediate predecessors Mozart and Haydn, was composed in the spring of 1797 when he was studying counterpoint under Johann Georg Albrechtsberger. Despite being clearly rooted in the 18th century, Beethoven was already demonstrating elements of his unique and innovative voice. For example, though *Symphony No. 1* is composed in the key of C Major, which is normally associated with simplicity, purity, and the fanfare of trumpets and drums, Beethoven

takes things in a new direction, evoking an air of mystery and query by beginning the first movement on a dissonant chord that resolves into F Major, or the “wrong” key. Beethoven further strays from the expected path by incorporating woodwinds and pizzicato strings, rather than employing the solidity of trumpets and timpani. He cleverly takes his time finding his way to C Major, and along the way delights in dramatic changes of dynamics, sharp accents, and sudden modulations to distant keys. When he finally reaches home, he does so with a wink, resolving the first movement with a coda of 22 measures of C Major played fortissimo.

Full of youthful energy, all of the movements of *Symphony No. 1* are given tempo markings that are unexpectedly fast for their commonly understood characters. For example, the third movement is a "Menuetto" that is marked "Allegro molto e vivace." When played at this faster tempo, the minuet loses all of the aristocratic grace of its 18th century predecessor and becomes virtually undanceable. In the fourth and final movement Beethoven is at his most playful and pays tribute to Haydn, his composition teacher and the one who enabled him to move to Vienna.

Beethoven's subtle deviance from expectations and established musical forms became more extreme as time went on. Even though *Symphony No. 1* has its feet firmly planted in the Classical period, Beethoven's small adjustments to this work demonstrate he was about to take the form in new directions, and become the champion of the Early Romantic period.

Next on the programme is **Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G minor***. The masterwork shares some brilliant characteristics of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1*, including abrupt modulations, a strikingly undanceable minuet, and musical enigma. Composed in 1788, it is widely known as one of Mozart's greatest works. Twentieth century pianist and writer Charles Rosen said that he heard “passionate violence and grief” in this work, while Hector Berlioz believed it was a “model of delicacy and naiveté.” Beethoven copied out 29 bars of the *Symphony No. 40 in G minor* in his notebook amid sketches of his own *Symphony No. 5*, demonstrating how the masterpiece served to inspire his imagination.

EMV's *50th Anniversary Gala* comes to a spectacular conclusion with the ***Gloria from Haydn's Creation Mass***. This rousing and majestic chorus features the combined forces of the Vancouver Chamber Choir, the Vancouver Cantata Singers, the Vancouver Bach Choir, and the PBO, all under the musical leadership of Alexander Weimann. Pulsing with energy and resounding joy, the *Gloria* is the perfect end to this celebratory concert. The work also serves as a performance practice nod to the late 18th- and early 19th-century tradition of ending orchestral concerts with a magnificent choral excerpt involving hundreds of singers drawn from large choral societies.

In addition to sharing these extraordinary performances of major works by Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn, EMV looks forward to announcing its captivating 2020–21 Season. Following the concert, there will be a dinner at Sage Bistro in celebration of EMV's 50th anniversary, and to raise funds for the commissioning of an exquisite copy of an 1819 fortepiano. For details about the dinner, click [here](#).

[About the Pacific Baroque Orchestra \(earlymusic.bc.ca/staff/pacific-baroque-orchestra\)](http://earlymusic.bc.ca/staff/pacific-baroque-orchestra)

The Pacific Baroque Orchestra (PBO) was formed in 1990 by a group of dedicated musicians who shared a passion for performing baroque and early classical music. In 2009, PBO welcomed Alexander Weimann, one of the most sought-after ensemble directors, soloists, and chamber music partners of his generation, as Music Director. Weimann's imaginative programming and expert leadership have drawn in many new concertgoers, and his creativity and engaging musicianship have carved out a unique and vital place for the orchestra in the cultural landscape of Vancouver. In addition to continuing its own annual Vancouver-based series, the orchestra is doing an increasing amount of touring and recording. In 2019, the orchestra played all over North America. Highlights included invitations to play at Koerner Hall in Toronto, Salle Bourgie in Montreal, Jordan Hall in Boston for the Boston Early Music Festival, and at Town Hall for Early Music Seattle.

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About Early Music Vancouver (earlymusic.bc.ca)

Founded in 1970 and celebrating its 50th anniversary season in 2019–20, Early Music Vancouver (EMV) has a long-standing international reputation for the presentation, production and study of classical and traditional repertoires using “historically informed performance practices.” Historically informed performance is based on two key aspects: the application of the stylistic and technical aspects of performance, known as performance practice; and the use of period instruments which may be reproductions of historical instruments that were in use at the time of the original composition.

EMV now offers the largest program of its type in North America, presenting and producing an average of 50 to 60 concerts per year featuring internationally renowned local, regional, and guest artists. EMV has a Main Season that runs through the Fall, Winter, and Spring, as well as a growing annual summer festival that was rebranded as the Vancouver Bach Festival in 2016. In 2019, EMV began the Pacific Baroque Series in Victoria, BC. It also has substantial education and outreach programmes including the Baroque Orchestra Mentorship Programme and BC Scholarship Programme.

LISTING INFORMATION

EMV presents *50th Anniversary Gala* Featuring Music of *Beethoven, Mozart, & Haydn*

Date: April 5, 2020 at 3pm
(Pre-Concert Talk at 2:15pm with Matthew White and Alexander Weimann)

Address: Chan Centre for the Performing Arts
University of British Columbia
6265 Crescent Rd, Vancouver BC, V6T 1Z1

Ticket Prices: From \$18

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

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