

# Concerted effort

New York City's early-music community joins forces to celebrate the riches of the local scene

By Anastasia Tsioulcas

New York is not considered a first-tier early-music center like Boston, Seattle or some of the European capitals, which is ironic, considering that New York has more dedicated early-music players than those cities," says Gene Murrow, general manager of the 30-year-old Early Music Foundation of New York (EMF). "The city deserves a higher profile, and if anyone has the credibility and momentum to do this, it's EMF."

Enthusiasts, of course, have long known that New York is home to some of the country's best early-music performers. In order to share that insider knowledge with a wider audience, Murrow enlisted literally dozens of performers to take part in the inaugural New York Early Music Celebration (NYEMC), which opens on Friday 1. Over the course of ten days, more than 60 concerts, master classes, lectures and other events—many of them free—will prove that New York's early-music offerings are a rich treasure trove that shouldn't be overlooked.

NYEMC performances will roam from the 11th to 18th centuries and over innumerable styles of composition, performance and presentation, from vocal ensemble Lionheart's intimately scaled "My Fayre Ladye: Images of Women in Medieval England" at the Church of St. Ignatius of Antioch (Friday 1) to New York City Opera's avant-garde presentation of Rameau's opera *Platée* at Lincoln Center (Saturday 2).

"There's something for everybody, not just in the types of performances, but in the mix of performers as well—from very well-known groups to two recorder play-ins for amateurs," says Karen Marie Marmer, one of the directors of the noted Rebel Baroque Orchestra, who with the



BACH PARTY Both seasoned professional musicians and enthusiastic amateurs will participate in the inaugural New York Early Music Celebration.

Trinity Choir will be presenting two English works, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, at Trinity Church on October 10. "My hope for all the players is that the celebration attracts people who wouldn't normally come to early-music concerts to attend these events and then return for future concerts."

Notably, Murrow points out that performers were allowed to plan their own presentations for the festival. "It's truly a grassroots, artist-driven event," he says. "We're not doing any curation; instead, we invited everyone in the community to put on an event during this ten-day period. So there's a huge range, from big stars like the vocal group Pomerium and Rebel to a performance by amateur group the Renaissance Street Singers, whom I like to think of as an early-music flash mob."

As well as introducing new audiences to the music, Murrow is also keenly interested in familiarizing concertgoers with some great performance spaces around town. "These are architectural and acoustical gems," he raves.

The venues range from the Brooklyn Friends Meeting House, an 1870 Quaker place of worship in downtown Brooklyn, to the Frick Collection on Museum Mile. Also included are many churches that have long hosted early-music performances, among them Trinity Church, the Upper East Side's St. Ignatius Loyola and Corpus Christi in Morningside Heights.

While the NYEMC offers myriad temptations to the neophyte and connoisseur alike, one of the highlights of the ten days will undoubtedly be Early Music New

## Album review

Igor Stravinsky

*The Rite of Spring*

Carl Nielsen

*Symphony No. 5*

Paavo Järvi conducting the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (Telarc)

Ignominiously dubbed "warhorses," the greatest works in the classical repertoire earn this distinction because of their ability to sustain varied, even antithetical interpretations. *The Rite of Spring* is already represented by a fistful of great recordings, but a new one must now be added to the shortlist. Järvi and his Cincinnati Symphony players achieve a bold and deliberate interpretation—coldly detached, yet utterly engaging.

The conductor proves himself a master at building and sustaining tension, particularly in the terrifying crescendos of "Spring Rounds" and "Dance of the Earth." Järvi works miracles of rhythmic and aural clarity in the "Procession of the Sage"; the primal chemistry he conjures in the concluding "Sacrificial Dance" is extraordinary.

Unusually, Järvi pairs the Stravinsky work with Carl Nielsen's masterpiece, his Fifth Symphony. In the first movement, Järvi pits the insistent, obsessive snare drum against the orchestra mercilessly; Gershwin-like turns in the strings serve as a fine balm during a lull in the battle. Orchestral surges during the finales of both movements reach Elgarian levels of glory.

This Telarc disc is available in CD and hybrid SACD (containing both stereo and multichannel tracks). The engineering is commendable in each format, but the sound particularly bristles in SACD, with rich string textures and mighty timpani and brass. With this album, Järvi furthers his reputation as one of our rising conductors of Stravinsky.—Ben Finane



Paavo Järvi

York's grand celebration of its 30th anniversary, in which founder and director Frederick Renz will lead an extravagant performance of two of Handel's most celebratory works, the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and *Water Music*, at St. Ignatius Loyola Church on Saturday 2. Renz notes, "We'll be performing the *Water Music* with the exact period-instrument forces which Handel prescribed—nine natural horns, nine natural trumpets and so forth—which, to our knowledge, is a first for New York. Having all these players assembled will create quite a spectacular sound."

Renz predicts good things not just for this inaugural event, but also for years to come. "This celebration is about bolstering the visibility of New York early-music artists," he says. "There are so many fine performers in New York, and the NYEMC gives scope to the gamut of activities that have been going on for years. The musicians are the real stars here."

The New York Early Music Celebration opens on Friday 1. For a complete list of events, see [www.nyemc.org](http://www.nyemc.org).

CLASSICAL & OPERA

Venues

150

MUSIC