Portland Baroque Orchestra Artistic Director Monica Huggett to Retire after 2020-2021 Season

Portland, OR – After more than 26 years leading Portland Baroque Orchestra (PBO), Monica Huggett plans to step down as Artistic Director following the 2020-2021 Season. Following her retirement, Monica will continue as Artistic Director Emeritus of PBO.

Monica Huggett was named PBO’s Artistic Director in 1994 after an exhaustive search. Prior to her appointment the orchestra had been led by a variety of guest directors including Artistic Advisor Ton Koopman. With Huggett at the helm, the orchestra expanded its programming in quantity, quality, and repertory. During her tenure, the orchestra has grown to the third largest period performance orchestra in the country with over 25 concerts events a year including the popular holiday performances of Handel’s Messiah.

From age seventeen, beginning as a freelance violinist in London, Monica Huggett earned her living solely as a violinist and artistic director and, in 2008, was appointed inaugural artistic director of The Juilliard School’s Historical Performance Program, where she continues as artistic advisor.

Additionally, she co-founded, with Ton Koopman, the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra; founded her own London-based ensemble, Sonnerie; worked with Christopher Hogwood at the Academy of Ancient Music and Trevor Pinnock with the English Concert; toured the United States in concert with James Galway; co-founded the Montana Baroque Festival in 2004; From 2006 to 2017 she was also the artistic director for Irish Baroque Orchestra.

Monica's recordings, numbering well over 100, have won numerous prizes and acclaim throughout her career. In addition to her baroque violin recordings, she recorded “Angie” with The Rolling Stones in 1972. She received the Gramophone Award for her recording of Biber’s violin sonatas (2002) and her recording of J.S. Bach’s “Orchestra Suites for a Young Prince” with Gonzalo X. Ruiz and Ensemble Sonnerie was nominated for a Grammy™ Award and won the Diapason d’or in 2009. Recordings with PBO include a 2011 recording of Bach’s St. John Passion (Avie), a 2014 release of “J.S. Bach Concertos for Oboe and Oboe d’amore” (Avie) featuring Gonzalo X. Ruiz, and a 2015 release of “J.S. Bach Concertos for One, Two and Three Violins.” In 2015, Juilliard Baroque, led by Monica, released its inaugural recording, “Couperin, Les Nations: Sonades, et Suites de Symphonies en Trio.”
“PBO has been so fortunate to have Monica Huggett grow and shape the orchestra for the past 25 years,” said Abigail McKee, Executive Director. “Her incredible talent and leadership has brought limitless beauty to Portland, and her musicianship truly has shaped the world of Baroque performance. While this transition is bittersweet, we are so excited to see what she does next!”

Audiences will have opportunities to see Monica perform and lead the orchestra during the remainder of the 2019-2020 Season in February during Trousers & Tiaras: Gender Roles in Handel Operas, April’s Bach Sonatas concert, and English Echoes: Neoclassical Reflections on 17th Century England in May. Audiences will also have the opportunity to hear Monica revisit her definitive performance of Vivaldi’s The Four Seasons in PBO’s special benefit concert on March 21, 2020. The Four Seasons in Celebration of Monica Huggett. The Four Seasons was Monica’s very first performance with the orchestra in 1992 prior to becoming Artistic Director two years later. PBO’s 2020-2021 Season, Monica’s final season, will be announced in Spring of 2020. Next steps in Artistic Director succession will also be announced in the Spring.

About Portland Baroque Orchestra

Founded in 1984, Portland Baroque Orchestra is the third-largest period performance orchestra in the United States. PBO specializes in works of the Baroque and Classical eras, but also explores the musical world outside of those time constraints, performing with period instruments or replicas of instruments that were available when the music was composed. This means that our concerts feature familiar instruments that may look or sound a little different (for example, violins with gut strings or flutes made of wood and bone) as well as instruments that are no longer a part of the modern orchestra (like the theorbo). Led by Artistic Director Monica Huggett, the orchestra thrives on spontaneity, playfulness, and extraordinary artistry. PBO seeks to recreate the live music experiences of history by presenting the highest level of music performance in intimate venues.

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