WORLD PREMIERE – EXCLUSIVE CANADIAN VENUE
AT THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
SPLENDORE A VENEZIA
ART AND MUSIC FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO BAROQUE
IN THE SERENISSIMA

Montreal, June 6, 2013 - From October 12, 2013, to January 19, 2014, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts will present an innovative interdisciplinary exhibition, exploring for the first time the important interrelationships that exist between the visual arts and music in the Venetian Republic, from the early sixteenth century to the fall of the Serenissima at the close of the eighteenth century, a period during which these art forms served the political ambitions of the state and civic institutions and became increasingly central to the economy of the Republic. This world premiere is being presented in Montreal, the exclusive Canadian venue.

Thanks to outstanding loans from prestigious museums and collectors, visitors to the exhibition Splendore a Venezia: Art and Music from the Renaissance to Baroque in the Serenissima will discover the splendours of Venice through the musical scene: salons, where chamber music performances were featured, the elaborate carnevale, the theatre, street performances and the festive, costumed commedia dell’arte.

Featuring approximately 120 paintings, prints and drawings, as well as historical instruments, musical manuscripts and texts, Splendore a Venezia: Art and Music from the Renaissance to Baroque in the Serenissima paints a portrait of extraordinary artistic and musical creativity. This exhibition organized by the Museum brings together masterworks by many of the most renowned names associated with the city on the lagoon: visual artists directly associated with the musical life of the city include Titian, Tintoretto, Bassano, Giovanni Battista and Domenico Tiepolo, and Francesco Guardi, many of whom were also amateur musicians, as well as Bernardo Strozzi, Pietro Longhi and Canaletto, whose paintings record the role of music in Venetian life. The exhibition also includes manuscripts and publications by Venetian composers like the Gabrieli, Monteverdi, Albinoni, Lotti and Vivaldi.
Nathalie Bondil, Director and Chief Curator of the MMFA, said, “In keeping with the original exhibition programming we began with Warhol Live, Imagine, Miles Davis and Lyonel Feininger, music takes its place front and centre with this new MMFA production. As D’Annunzio said: “In Venice, in the same way that one cannot feel except in music, one cannot think if not in images.” That’s how it is at the MMFA, too: it is impossible to see without listening or to listen without seeing.” In a presentation that resembles the Museum’s previous multidisciplinary exhibitions, Splendore a Venezia will give visitors an opportunity to enjoy musical accompaniment related to each theme in the galleries, thus enhancing the exploration of each of these works.

Exhibition curator Hilliard T. Goldfarb, Associate Chief Curator and Curator of Old Masters at the MMFA and a specialist of the Italian Renaissance, developed the concept of this original exhibition produced by the MMFA, by gaining inspiration from an idea put forward by the Musée de la musique in Paris. This exhibition will be circulated by the MMFA to the Portland Art Museum in Oregon from March 7 to June 8, 2014. The exhibition’s musical accompaniment is being overseen by musicologist François Filiatrault.

The works, on loan from prominent international collections like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Morgan Library & Museum, the New York Public Library, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art (Washington), the Palatine Gallery, Uffizi, Capitoline, Cini Foundation, Accademia, Museo Correr, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Thyssen-Bornemisza, the Dulwich Picture Gallery, the National Gallery (London) and the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), and the Cité de la musique in Paris, among others.

Extensive associated programming includes a series of concerts with period instruments in the MMFA’s Bourgie Hall, as well as related activities throughout the city.

**Visual arts, music and politics from the early sixteenth century to the fall of the Serenissima**

The visual arts and musical scenes during the extraordinarily creative period from Titian to Guardi and Willaert to Vivaldi were profoundly interconnected. The world’s first public opera house (1639) opened in Venice, which boasted no fewer than nine commercial opera houses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Modern music typography was invented in Venice, and it was there that the most important musical presses in Europe were located.

Public musical concerts were crucial to the economic strength of Venice’s scuole (rich, powerful brotherhoods) and ospedali (establishments for the poor and orphans). Each year, a variety of processions were held in celebration of special occasions. These were recorded in the visual arts and celebrated in music, in turn serving its government, which sponsored the arts. Music and the visual arts also became central to state propaganda and the Republic’s state receptions and international profile.
EXHIBITION THEMES
The exhibition is organized along three broad conceptual themes reflecting specific, parallel and interrelated characteristics of art and music during this critical period of Venetian history.

Art and Music in the Public Sphere
For Venice, steeped in classical and Medieval culture, music symbolized universal harmony and, by extension, good government. Music contributed to the splendour of civic commemorations, official celebrations and religious rites, and its role in the ducal chapel, public processions, churches, scuole, ospedali and other places central to Venetian life was immortalized by painters, printmakers and draftsmen.

a. Ceremonies and Processions
Music accompanied the ruling doge in processions announced by a fanfare of brass. In the chapel, he was extolled by wind, string and keyboard instruments and large choirs. This section presents a wide range of works, including a rare print of the procession of the doge that is over 4 metres long, a portrait by Titian of Doge Francesco Venier, depictions of events at Saint Mark’s Basilica and the church of San Zanipolo, such as Canaletto’s Interior of San Marco, Venice and Guardi’s The Papal Visit of Pius VI in the Church of S. Zanipolo, illustrating the role of the arts as interface between religion and politics. Other objects include illuminated choir books, manuscripts and period instruments never before exhibited in North America, as well as costume pieces, including a corno ducale, the bonnet-like crown worn by doges on official occasions.

b. The role of the scuole, rich, powerful brotherhoods and the ospedali, establishments for the poor and orphans
Venice was home to a network of scuole that were sponsors and patrons of artists and musicians. Even more remarkable were the ospedali, renowned for their musical ensembles. Well-known musicians like Vivaldi composed for these ensembles, enhancing their prestige. This section includes Tiepolo’s The Coronation of the Virgin, a rare oil sketch the artist used as a model for a ceiling fresco in the newly constructed church of the Pietà, Santa Maria della Visitazione, famed for its all-girl choir. Also on view: Gabriel Bella’s concert scene Orphan Girls Singing for the Dukes of the North, the first edition of The Four Seasons by Vivaldi, who taught violin at the Ospedale della Pietà, and Canaletto’s wonderful Feast Day of San Roch, a special loan from the National Gallery in London.

Art and Music in the Private Realm
In the private domain, music was the art of the courtier and the educated class. Nobles were often portrayed playing the lute or composing, and thus identified with the values associated with music: philosophical speculation, scientific inquiry, intellectual and spiritual elevation. Contrary to the lowly pipes played by shepherds in pastoral or allegorical scenes, the instruments of the elite symbolized culture and were frequently ornamented with precious materials, as seen in the exhibited lutes, theorbos and harpsichords.
a. Musicians
Venetian portraiture often explored the musician as subject. Depicted alone or in groups, in allegorical, mythological or genre scenes, the figures appear in attire and with attributes that literally and figuratively reflect their dedication to music. Titian’s great painting *The Concert*, on loan from the Palatine Gallery in Florence will feature prominently in this section. It is of particular interest as a masterpiece of Titian’s early maturity and for its art historical significance, which links the artist to his master, Giorgione. Works like *The Lute Player* by Cariani, a disciple of Giorgione, *Self-portrait with a Madrigal* of Marietta Robusti (La Tintoretta, the daughter of Tintoretto), Annibale Carracci’s *Portrait of Claudio Merulo* and many other masterworks will illustrate the wide variety of styles and treatments.

b. Concerts
Music evolved on several fronts during the golden age of the Venetian Republic. Private concerts expanded to multiple instruments, and full orchestras were established to perform elaborate compositions. Venice was home to Europe’s leading music publishers, who thrived selling books of *frottola* (popular secular songs), lute tablatures and concerto scores for harpsichord, violin and other instruments. Songbooks like Ottaviano dei Petrucci’s extremely rare volume *Odhecaton A* (1501), the first musical score with movable type ever published and one of the greatest monuments in the history of publishing, promoted the practice of music and helped foster enlightened audiences.

Venetian painters were distinguished by their passion for music, as seen in Longhi’s *Il Concertino* and other works in this section. The love of all things musical is also evident in *A Still Life with Musical Instruments in an Interior* by Evaristo Baschenis, who is credited with inventing a new still-life genre featuring musical instruments (often Venetian-made) in pleasing arrangements.

c. Street Scenes
Music was not confined to the official, cultivated establishment. Lively popular songs were circulated by gondoliers and street performers, as captured in works like Giacomo Franco’s *Music on the Grand Canal* and Giovanni Battista Piazzetta’s *The Singer*. Manuscript songbooks for gondolas document the way various cultural communities influenced the repertoire. Music was also associated with *carnevale*, which transformed Venice into pure theatre in the Western imagination. The festive carnival spirit reigns in Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo’s *Minuet*, Strozzi’s *Street Musicians* and other open-air scenes.

Art, Music and Mythology
The world’s first public opera house, the Teatro Nuovo di San Cassian, presented its first opera production in Venice in 1637, and by the eighteenth century, the city boasted no fewer than nine such venues. Opera composers, from Monteverdi to Handel and Vivaldi focussed their hopes on seeing their works produced and published in Venice. Opera became a staple of social activity, and its production, a driving force in the Venetian Republic’s economy, provided jobs for set builders, costumers, stagehands, performers and countless others. At the same time, the classical mythology that inspired the creation of many librettos emerged in music-related painting.
a. Mythology
Italian Renaissance painting conveys a classical heritage marked by allegory, myths and symbols. Apollo, Venus and other deities are frequently pictured, and scenes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* inspired Titian throughout his career. But in Venice, there was the added factor of music. Music features in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, one of the greatest publications of the Renaissance, created in Venice in 1499 by the publisher, editor and printer Aldus Manutius. Tintoretto’s monumental ceiling painting for Pietro Aretino, *The Contest between Apollo and Marsyas*, is a superb example of the practice of combining themes associated with music. *The Concert of the Muses and other Goddesses*, created as a painted harpsichord cover by Tintoretto, as well as Sebastiano Ricci’s *Vénus entourée de nymphes contemplant une ronde de cupidons*, created for the same purpose, will be presented. Other works by Tintoretto, Tiziano Aspetti and two wonderful Tiepolo paintings depicting the parting of Rinaldo and Armida, inspired by the poem *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Tasso, a popular opera subject of the period and borrowed from the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin and the Uffizi in Florence, will be featured in this section.

b. Opera
Under the guise of allegorical and mythological figures, opera explored and reflected contemporary themes and issues. The number of public theatres grew rapidly as audiences embraced the new form of entertainment designed for eyes and ears alike. This enthusiasm will be illustrated by paintings, prints, drawings and sketches of well-known singers and composers. A lovely pastel portrait of the great soprano Faustina Bordoni, as well as a delightful group of caricatures of Farinelli, Caffariello, Antonio Campioni and other famous opera singers by the Venetian artist, critic, printmaker and collector Antonio Maria Zanetti the Elder, will add a special touch to the exhibition. These drawings, never before exhibited in North America, offer a humorous and less formal view of the opera world.

Art book
To accompany this exhibition, the MMFA’s Publishing Department is co-publishing a full-colour exhibition catalogue, in English and French editions, with Hazan, Paris. The catalogue features essays by leading international experts in Venetian art, culture and music, under the general editorship of Dr. Hilliard T. Goldfarb. He is joined by a distinguished team of international cultural and musico logical experts, including Tiziana Bottecchia, Dawson Carr, Francesca del Torre, Joël Dugot, Iain Fenlon, Caroline Giron, Jonathan Glixon, Sergio Guarino, Eugene Johnson, Piero Lucchi and Ellen Rosand. This publication will serve as a reference work that will make an ongoing contribution to the body of knowledge on music and the visual arts in the private and public realms of the Venetian Republic. It will be distributed internationally by Hazan (French edition) and Yale University Press (English edition).

An incredibly diverse musical programming presented in connection with the exhibition
The MMFA and the Arte Musica Foundation, in residence at the Museum, combine their expertise and resources to present about 140 concerts in the Bourgie Concert Hall each year, welcoming an average of 45,000 spectators.
The exhibition presented by the MMFA is the ideal occasion to make a foray into the incredibly rich world of Venetian music. From October to January, the Arte Musica Foundation will present 20 concerts in Bourgie Hall covering five centuries of music, both instrumental and vocal, sacred, profane and traditional.

Although the exhibition focusses on the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the time limits have been pushed back to include the nineteenth century – with a literary and musical performance – and the twentieth century – with a soirée to pay tribute to two sons of Venice, Luigi Nono and Bruno Maderna – and the twenty-first century – with the creation of a musical fairytale for children with giant marionettes, Le Chat et le gondolier.

The concerts include majestic choral works by Monteverdi and Gabrieli performed by the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal; traditional songs for voice and lute with the Italian ensemble Accordone and the tenor Marco Beasley, who sang on the soundtrack of the film Tous les soleils; music for two organs; Italian arias and concertos performed by renowned Montreal ensembles and soloists; as well as two major works by Vivaldi; the Montreal premiere of the oratorio Juditha Triumphans with the Ensemble Caprice; and The Four Seasons with soloists and musicians from the OSM.

Credits and presentation of the exhibition
This exhibition is organized by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, under the direction of Nathalie Bondil and Hilliard T. Goldfarb. METRO is the presenting sponsor of this exhibition in Montreal in collaboration with the Volunteer Association of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

This exhibition has also been made possible thanks to the support of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Air Canada, Astral, Richter, La Presse and The Gazette.

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Images of several of the works are available on the Museum’s website at mbam.qc.ca/media.

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About the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has one of the highest attendance rates among Canadian museums. Every year, more than 700,000 people visit its unique encyclopedic collection (free of charge) and its original temporary exhibitions, which combine artistic disciplines (fine arts, music, film, fashion and design) and feature innovative exhibition designs. It initiates, produces and circulates many of its exhibitions across Europe and North America. It is also one of Canada’s leading publishers of art books in English and French, which are distributed worldwide. Over 100,000 families and school groups take part in its educational, cultural and community-oriented programmes each year. The fall of 2011 saw the opening of a fourth pavilion at the Museum – the Claire and Marc Bourgie Pavilion of Quebec and Canadian Art – and a 444-seat concert venue – Bourgie Hall – housing an outstanding collection of Tiffany stained glass windows. This expansion also brought about the reinstallation of the Museum’s rich holdings in its other three pavilions, which house the World Cultures, Early and Contemporary European Art, and Decorative Arts and Design collections. Music is now an integral part of the Museum, providing another perspective on the visual arts, through musical audioguides and other innovative activities. In 2012, the new Studios Art & Education Michel de la Chenelière were inaugurated, doubling the Museum’s educational facilities for schools, families and community groups. A fifth pavilion, devoted to international art, will open its doors by 2017.