

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 14, 2011

CONTACT: Kathleen Fay, Executive Director | Boston Early Music Festival
161 First Street, Suite 202 | Cambridge, MA 02142
617-661-1812 | kathy@bemf.org | www.bemf.org



**THE BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL PRESENTS CHARPENTIER'S
LA DESCENTE D'ORPHÉE AUX ENFERS AND *LA COURONNE DE FLEURS*,
THE FOURTH ANNUAL CHAMBER OPERA SERIES**

Cambridge, MA – November 14, 2011- The **Boston Early Music Festival** will present the fourth in its annual series of Baroque chamber operas, a double bill of **Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*** and ***La Couronne de Fleurs*** as part of its annual concert season on **Saturday, November 26, 2011 at 8pm** and **Sunday, November 27 at 3pm** at **New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall** (30 Gainsborough Street in Boston, MA). Tickets are priced at \$19, \$38, \$49, \$66, and \$125 are available through the Boston Early Music Festival at **617-661-1812** or at **WWW.BEMF.ORG**, as well as through the Jordan Hall Box Office located at 30 Gainsborough Street in Boston and by telephone at 617-585-1260.

The Charpentier double bill will be led by three-time Grammy-nominated **BEMF Artistic Co-Directors Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs**; along with **Stage Director Gilbert Blin**; **Costume Designer Anna Watkins**; and **Choreographer Melinda Sullivan**. Starring in the title role of *Orphée* will be tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, who last appeared with BEMF in the Chamber Opera Series production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* which toured North America earlier this year. Sheehan won critical acclaim in the title role of *Acis*, being praised by *The New York Times* for his "attractive, strong tenor and fluid acting style." A frequent BEMF opera cast member, his past appearances include the lead in the 2008 Chamber Opera Series production of Charpentier's *Actéon* and *L'Amour* in the 2007 Festival Centerpiece and subsequent Grammy-nominated recording of Lully's *Psyche*, among others. Sheehan leads a vocal cast of favorites from past BEMF opera productions including Mireille Asselin, Carrie Henneman Shaw, Michael Kelly, Olivier Laquerre, Thea Lobo, Jason McStoots, Megan Stapleton, Brenna Wells, and Douglas Williams. They appear alongside four dancers with the **BEMF Baroque Dance Ensemble**, and the ten member **BEMF Chamber Ensemble** including concertmaster **Robert Mealy**.

For its fourth annual Chamber Opera Series production, BEMF returns to Marc-Antoine Charpentier, the composer of *Actéon* in BEMF's first presentation of chamber operas in 2008. These two miniature masterpieces of the French Baroque explore the transcendental power of music and showcase Charpentier's brilliance. "These two pieces reveal Charpentier's richness of style," remarks Stage Director Gilbert Blin. "They also offer a meditation on the 'functions' of music—from songs of royal praise to personal lament—and how music has the power to transcend reality."

La Couronne de Fleurs, based on a text by Molière, depicts a musical contest in tribute to Louis XIV as shepherds vie for a crown of flowers from the goddess Flora for the most beautiful and eloquent aria. The tragic ***La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*** tells the famous story of Orphée who descends into the underworld to rescue his beloved Euridice using his musical charms. Unlike most versions of the story, Charpentier's score ends as Orphée and Euridice begin their ascent from the underworld, omitting the legend's final tragedy. For this new production, Stage Director Gilbert Blin presents both works together, imagining a performance of *La Couronne de Fleurs* where *Orphée* is offered as an entry in the poetic contest being depicted.

WHO: Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series

WHEN: Saturday, November 26, 2011 at 8pm
Sunday, November 27, 2011 at 3pm

WHERE: New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, 30 Gainsborough Street, Boston, MA

PROGRAM: Marc-Antoine Charpentier: *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*
Marc-Antoine Charpentier: *La Couronne de Fleurs*

Paul O'Dette & Stephen Stubbs, *Musical Directors*
Gilbert Blin, *Stage Director*
Anna Watkins, *Costume Designer*
Melinda Sullivan, *Choreographer*

Vocal Cast

Aaron Sheehan, *Orphée*
Mireille Asselin, Carrie Henneman Shaw, Michael Kelly, Olivier Laquerre, Thea Lobo,
Jason McStoots, Megan Stapleton, Brenna Wells, Douglas Williams

Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble

Robert Mealy, *concertmaster*
Cynthia Roberts, *violin*
Laura Jeppesen, *viola da gamba*
Christel Thielmann, *viola da gamba*
Beiliang Zhu, *viola da gamba*
Gonzalo X. Ruiz, *oboe & recorder*
Kathryn Montoya, *oboe & recorder*
Avi Stein, *harpsichord*
Paul O'Dette, *Baroque guitar and theorbo*
Stephen Stubbs, *Baroque guitar and theorbo*

Boston Early Music Festival Baroque Dance Ensemble

Carlos Fittante, Olsi Gjerci, Caitlin Klinger, Alexis Silver, *Baroque dancers*

TICKETS: Tickets priced at **\$19, \$38, \$49, \$66, and \$125** each can be purchased at **WWW.BEMF.ORG** and **617-661-1812**; a \$5 discount for students, seniors, and groups of 10 or more is offered by calling 617-661-1812. Subscription discounts of 10% are available with the purchase of three or more programs.

Individual tickets are also available through the **Jordan Hall Box Office** located at 30 Gainsborough Street in Boston and by telephone at **617-585-1260**.

RESOURCES

Download artist photos

<http://www.bemf.org/pages/press/images.htm>

ABOUT THE BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL CHAMBER OPERA SERIES

In 2008, BEMF took the same level of musicianship and scholarship employed in their fully-staged Festival opera productions and directed it towards small-scale works with the introduction of the **BEMF Chamber Opera Series**. Each production would feature intimate staging with full costumes and elements of Baroque dance. The inaugural production in November 2008 paired Charpentier's *Actéon* with Blow's *Venus and Adonis* and was hailed by the *Boston Globe* as "vivid performances of two seldom-heard works" and "a highly welcome addition to the local concert calendar." Subsequent productions include Handel's original 1718 chamber version of *Acis and Galatea* in 2009 and a 2011 North American Tour and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* in 2010. Recordings of Charpentier's *Actéon* and Blow's *Venus and Adonis* have been released by BEMF in the last year.

ABOUT THE BOSTON EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Recognized as the preeminent early music presenter and Baroque opera producer in North America, the **Boston Early Music Festival** has been credited with securing Boston's reputation as "America's early music capital" (*The Boston Globe*). Founded in 1981, the Boston Early Music Festival offers diverse programs and activities, including three Grammy-nominated opera recordings, an annual concert series that brings early music's brightest stars to the Boston and New York concert stages, and a biennial week-long Festival and Exhibition recognized as the "world's leading festival of early music" (*The Times*, London). The 17th Boston Early Music Festival is planned for June 9–16, 2013.

The 2011–2012 Boston Early Music Festival Concert Series is presented with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, ConstellationCenter, 99.5 All Classical, Harpsichord Clearing House, Zuckermann Harpsichords International, The Gregory E. Bulger Foundation, U. S. Trust/Bank of America Private Wealth Management, and GTC Law Group.

Dates, times, venues, artists, and programs are subject to change.

For more information, images, press tickets, or to schedule an interview, please contact Kathleen Fay at 617-661-1812 or email kathy@bemf.org.

#####