

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The GRAMMY-Winning Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series presents Francesca Caccini's *Alcina* on Thanksgiving weekend – November 24 & 25 in Boston and November 26 & 27 in New York City

Cambridge, MA – The GRAMMY Award-winning **Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series** returns on Thanksgiving weekend with an all-new production of the first opera by a woman composer, Francesca Caccini's *Alcina*. *Alcina* is a brilliant entertainment, full of wit, magic, and drama, with a demanding title role first sung by the composer herself. The production will receive four performances: Saturday, November 24 and Sunday, November 25 in Boston, and Monday, November 26 and Tuesday, November 27 in New York City.

“Women have been shaping the world of opera from the very beginning, and we at BEMF are excited to present a new production of the first opera by a female composer, Francesca Caccini's 1625 *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*,” offers Executive Director **Kathleen Fay**. “As more and more women are finding their voice in opera, whether as artists, producers, patrons, or composers, it is exciting to be reminded that this is not a new phenomenon. We have been here for nearly 400 years already, and we are only getting started!”

This groundbreaking work is brought to life by the all-star BEMF Vocal and Chamber Ensembles in a magnificent production featuring gorgeous costumes and elegant period staging. Led by BEMF's GRAMMY-winning Musical Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** and Stage Director **Gilbert Blin**, the directorial team also features Concertmaster **Robert Mealy**, Dance Director **Melinda Sullivan**, Costume Designer **Anna Watkins**, and Executive Producer **Kathleen Fay**. The dynamic cast of 15 singers features many BEMF favorites, including Canadian soprano **Shannon Mercer** (*Alcina*), praised for “the lyric beauty and surprising power of her voice” (*Salt Lake Tribune*); tenor **Colin Balzer** (*Ruggiero*), a frequent guest of BEMF's Centerpiece Opera productions and recordings; and mezzo-soprano **Kelsey Lauritano** (*Melissa*), who made her debut with the BEMF Orchestra at the June 2017 Festival. These superb vocalists appear alongside the twelve-member **BEMF Chamber Ensemble**.

A contemporary of Monteverdi and a colleague of Galileo, Francesca Caccini came of age in Florence during the earliest years of opera as an art form. Both a composer and a performer, she was one of the most important musical figures at the Medici court during the regency of Christina of Lorraine and Maria Maddalena. In 1625, amid this time of female leadership, she created *Alcina*, the first opera by a woman composer and among the first Italian operas performed outside of Italy. Adapted from Ludovico Ariosto's 16th-century epic poem *Orlando furioso*, the sorceress *Alcina* stands at the center of a struggle between illusion and destiny as the valiant *Melissa* strives to save the warrior *Ruggiero* and liberate the captives *Alcina* has transformed into plants and trees to ornament her island.

ARTISTS: Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series

Paul O'Dette & Stephen Stubbs, *Musical Directors*

Gilbert Blin, *Stage Director*

Robert Mealy, *Concertmaster*

Melinda Sullivan, *Choreographer*

Anna Watkins, *Costume Designer*

Kathleen Fay, *Executive Producer*

Boston Early Music Festival Vocal Ensemble

Shannon Mercer, *Alcina*

Colin Balzer, *Ruggiero*

Kelsey Lauritano, *Melissa*

Teresa Wakim, Margot Rood, Sonja DuToit Tengblad, Danielle Sampson,

Sophie Michaux, Mindy Ella Chu, Jason McStoots, Brian Giebler, David Evans,

David McFerrin, Ian Pomerantz & Daniel Fridley

Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble

Paul O'Dette & Stephen Stubbs, *chitarrone & Baroque guitar*; Robert Mealy &

Julie Andrijeski, *violin*; Sarah Darling, *viola*; Erin Headley, Christel Thielmann &

Laura Jeppesen, *viola da gamba*; Kathryn Montoya & Héloïse Degrugillier, *recorder*;

Maxine Eilander, *Baroque harp*; Michael Sponseller, *organ, regal & harpsichord*

WHEN: Saturday, November 24, 2018 at 8pm

Sunday, November 25, 2018 at 3pm

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

Monday, November 26, 2018 at 7:30pm

Tuesday, November 27, 2018 at 7:30pm

Gilder Lehrman Hall at the Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street, New York, NY

PROGRAM: Francesca Caccini's *Alcina*

TICKETS: Tickets for the Boston performances are priced at **\$25, \$45, \$55, \$75, and \$125** each, and can be purchased at **www.BEMF.org** and **617-661-1812**; as well as through the Jordan Hall Box Office located at 30 Gainsborough Street in Boston and by telephone at 617-585-1260; a \$5 discount for students, seniors, and groups is available by calling 617-661-1812. Subscription discounts are available with the purchase of three or more programs on the 2018-2019 Season.

Tickets for the New York performance are priced at **\$55** for Morgan members and **\$65** for non-members, and can be purchased at **www.themorgan.org/bemf** and at **212-685-0008 ext. 560**.

ASSOCIATED EVENTS:

There will be a Pre-Opera Talk with members of the directorial team one hour prior to each performance in Boston, and one half-hour prior to each performance in New York.

RESOURCES:

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

BEMF's 2018–2019 Season Press Release: http://www.bemf.org/pages/press/071618_1819season.htm

ABOUT THE BEMF CHAMBER OPERA SERIES:

Hailed by the *Boston Globe* for “vivid performances,” since 2008 the **BEMF Chamber Opera Series** has taken the internationally acclaimed musicianship, scholarship, and direction showcased in BEMF's fully staged Festival operas and focused it on small-scale works in intimate productions each Thanksgiving weekend. Two productions from the Chamber Opera Series have also been presented on tour across North America: Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in 2011 and Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs* in 2014. BEMF's studio recording of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs* was awarded the 2015 GRAMMY Award for Best Opera Recording.

ABOUT THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM:

The Morgan Library & Museum began as the private library of financier Pierpont Morgan, one of the preeminent collectors and cultural benefactors in the United States. Today, more than a century after its founding, the Morgan serves as a museum, independent research library, musical venue, architectural landmark, and historical site. Located at Madison Avenue and 36th Street, its collection includes world-renowned collections of drawings, literary and historical manuscripts, musical scores, medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, printed books, photography, and ancient near Eastern seals and tablets. Gilder Lehrman Hall, designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano, was opened by the Morgan in May 2006, and seats 264 people, providing a uniquely intimate concert venue. This marks the Boston Early Music Festival's 13th season of concerts at the Morgan Library & Museum.

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 (BEMF)** has been credited with securing Boston's reputation as “America's early music capital” (*The Boston Globe*). Founded in 1981, BEMF offers diverse programs and activities, including one GRAMMY Award-winning and four GRAMMY Award-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 20th Boston Early Music Festival will take place from June 9–16, 2019, and feature the fully staged North American premiere of Agostino Steffani's *Orlando* as the Centerpiece Opera. BEMF's Artistic Leadership includes Artistic Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs**, Opera Director **Gilbert Blin**, Orchestra Director **Robert Mealy**, and Dance Director **Melinda Sullivan**.

The 2018-2019 Boston Early Music Festival Concert Series is presented with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, WGBH Radio Boston, and Harpsichord Clearing House, as well as a number of generous foundations and individuals from around the world.

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

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