

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
43 Thorndike Street, Suite 302
Cambridge, MA 02141
617-661-1812 | www.bemf.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 24, 2015

Boston Early Music Festival releases EIGHTH Baroque Opera CD, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*

Cambridge, MA – The Boston Early Music Festival has released its eighth Baroque opera CD, **George Frideric Handel's *Acis and Galatea*** in its original chamber version of 1718, on the German label cpo (Classic Produktion Osnabrück). Initially presented as the second installment of the BEMF Chamber Opera Series in November 2009, the production was also reprised for a six-city North American tour. Days after the conclusion of BEMF's June 2013 Festival, musicians and singers departed Boston to Bremen, Germany and the acoustically brilliant Sendesaal (former site of Radio Bremen) for recording sessions for both *Acis and Galatea* and BEMF's GRAMMY Award-winning 2014 release of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs*. Musical Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** led the original 2009 cast featuring **Aaron Sheehan** as Acis, **Teresa Wakim** as Galatea, **Douglas Williams** as Polyphemus, **Jason McStoots** as Damon, and **Zachary Wilder** as Coridon. **BEMF Orchestra Director Robert Mealy** leads the ten member BEMF Chamber Ensemble and **BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin** serves as Drama Coach on the 2-CD set, which also features Handel's solo cantata *Sarei troppo felice* with soprano **Amanda Forsythe**.

While *Acis and Galatea* is familiar to modern audiences in Handel's 1739 two-act version, the 1718 version of this cherished pastoral opera was Handel's first dramatic work in English when it was presented as a one-act masque at the idyllic estate at Cannons, home of the composer's patron James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos. Written as a courtly entertainment about the simplicity of rural life, *Acis and Galatea* contains a significant amount of wit and self-parody, depicting the love affair between the nymph Galatea and the shepherd Acis, whose reunion is thwarted by the monster Polyphemus. BEMF's 2009 production was hailed by *The Boston Globe* as "richly staged" and "musically impeccable". During the 2011 tour, the *Vancouver Sun* hailed the intimate production as "a wonderful evocation of the early 18th-century and performed with remarkable elegance."

BEMF will mark the CD release with a revival of its acclaimed 2009 production as part of the **BEMF Chamber Opera Series** on Thanksgiving weekend, **Saturday November 28, 2015 at 8pm and Sunday, November 29, 2015 at 3pm at NEC's Jordan Hall**. GRAMMY Award-winning Musical Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** along with renowned Stage Director **Gilbert Blin** lead this magnificent production with a cast including **Aaron Sheehan, Teresa Wakim, Douglas Williams, Jason McStoots,** and **Mark Williams**.

ABOUT THE BEMF BAROQUE OPERA PROJECT

One of BEMF's main goals is to unearth and present lesser-known Baroque operas performed by the world's leading musicians armed with the latest information on period singing, orchestral performance, costuming, dance, and staging. BEMF operas reproduce the Baroque's stunning palette of sound by

bringing together today's leading operatic superstars and a wealth of instrumental talent from across the globe to one stage for historic presentations, all zestfully led from the pit by the BEMF Artistic Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs, and creatively reimaged for the stage by BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin. Since 2008, the BEMF Chamber Opera Series has taken this internationally acclaimed musicianship, scholarship, and direction 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.

In 2004, BEMF initiated a series of recordings to preserve its groundbreaking Baroque opera creations and to attempt to fill the gaps in the current discography of Western opera. The first three CDs in the series earned GRAMMY nominations for Best Opera Recording and Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs* won in this category at the 2015 GRAMMY Awards.

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 three 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 19th Boston Early Music Festival will take place from June 11–18, 2017, and will feature fully staged performances of André Campra's *Le Carnaval de Venise* as the Centerpiece Opera. BEMF's Artistic Leadership includes Artistic Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs**, Opera Director **Gilbert Blin**, and Orchestra Director **Robert Mealy**.

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

#####