

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 3, 2016

The GRAMMY-Winning Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series presents *VERSAILLES: Portrait of a Royal Domain* on Thanksgiving weekend – November 26 & 27 in Boston and November 28 & 29 in New York City

Cambridge, MA - The GRAMMY Award–winning **Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series** returns on Thanksgiving weekend for its ninth consecutive year with an all-new production inspired by the splendor and music of the French royal court. *VERSAILLES: Portrait of a Royal Domain* is a spectacle from the height of Louis XIV's reign with two chamber operas—Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* and Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles*—exalting the majesty of the palace and its gardens, alongside *divertissements* from Lully's *Atys*. Produced in partnership with the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, the production will receive four performances: Saturday, November 26 and Sunday, November 27 in Boston, and Monday November 28 and Tuesday, November 29 in New York City.

"The Boston Early Music Festival has enjoyed a rich experience with the French operas of the 17th century, and especially the wonderful music of Charpentier," observes Stage Director Gilbert Blin. "His unique and rather funny *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* inspired us to create a production of works connected to the famous palace of Louis XIV. Together, the titles answer each other, creating a sumptuous image of the Versailles castle and gardens."

The elegance and drama of these three works is brought to life by the all-star BEMF Vocal and Chamber Ensembles in a magnificent production featuring gorgeous costumes and sumptuous 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**, Choreographer **Carlos Fittante**, Costume Designer **Anna Watkins**, and Executive Producer **Kathleen Fay**. GRAMMY-Winning tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, praised by *BBC Music Magazine* for his "light, lyrical voice [which] delivers the music with utter naturalness," heads a cast of twelve dynamic singers, including soprano **Mireille Asselin**, tenor **Jason McStoots**, baritone **Jesse Blumberg**, and other favorites of past BEMF opera productions. These brilliant vocalists appear alongside the eleven member **BEMF Chamber Ensemble** and the **BEMF Dance Ensemble**.

Serving as the King of France for over 72 years, Louis XIV oversaw a massive transformation in the political and cultural life of French society. Among his accomplishments was the transformation of his father's pastoral hunting lodge at Versailles into a lavish palace that served as the seat of government and culture in France. BEMF's new production showcases a musical feast from the celebrated Sun King's reign with masterworks by some of the most revered composers from Louis's court. Originally performed in the King's private apartments at the palace in 1682, Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* sees the courtly pleasures come to life and bicker for supremacy before the god of banquets restores

the peace. The pleasures then usher in a selection of *divertissements* from Lully's 1672 opera *Atys*—called the "King's Opera" for the enduring favor it enjoyed with Louis. Finally, Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles*—first performed in the King's apartments in the spring of 1683—sees the sculpted deities who ornament the garden's dazzling fountains come alive to sing in praise of the Sun King.

ARTISTS: Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Opera Series

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

Gilbert Blin, *Stage Director*

Robert Mealy, *Concertmaster*

Melinda Sullivan, *Dance Director*

Carlos Fittante, *Choreographer*

Anna Watkins, *Costume Designer*

Kathleen Fay, *Executive Producer*

Boston Early Music Festival Vocal Ensemble

Mireille Asselin, Jesse Blumberg, Olivier Laquerre, Mireille Lebel, Jason McStoots,

Oliver Mercer, Sophie Michaux, Molly Netter, Margot Rood, Aaron Sheehan,

John Taylor Ward, and Virginia Warnken

Boston Early Music Festival Dance Company

Carlos Fittante, *First Dancer*

Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble

Robert Mealy & Cynthia Roberts, *violin*

Sarah Darling, *viola*

Laura Jeppesen, *viola da gamba*

Phoebe Carrai, *violoncello*

Gonzalo X. Ruiz & Kathryn Montoya, *oboe and recorder*

Marilyn Boenau, *bassoon and recorder*

Michael Sponseller, *harpsichord*

Paul O'Dette, *theorbo*

Stephen Stubbs, *guitar and theorbo*

WHEN: Saturday, November 26, 2016 at 8pm

Sunday, November 27, 2016 at 3pm

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

Monday, November 28, 2016 at 7:30pm

Tuesday, November 29, 2016 at 7:30pm

Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum, 225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street, New York, NY

PROGRAM: VERSAILLES: *Portrait of a Royal Domain*

Marc-Antoine Charpentier: *Les Plaisirs de Versailles*

Michel Richard de Lalande: *Les Fontaines de Versailles*

Jean-Baptiste Lully: *Divertissements* from *Atys*

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 2016–2017 Season.

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

ASSOCIATED EVENTS:

There will be a Pre-Opera Talk with **Benoit Dratwicki**, Artistic Director of the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, one hour prior to each performance.

RESOURCES:

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

BEMF's 2016–2017 Season Press Release: http://www.bemf.org/pages/press/052416_1617season.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 historic 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 11th 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 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**, Orchestra Director **Robert Mealy**, and Dance Director **Melinda Sullivan**.

The 2016–2017 Boston Early Music Festival Concert Series is presented with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, ConstellationCenter, WGBH Radio Boston, Harpsichord Clearing House, Zuckermann Harpsichords International, and The Gregory E. Bulger Foundation.

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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