

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
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PRESS RELEASE: Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF) tours its chamber opera productions featuring two works by Charpentier to British Columbia and New York City, March 14–18, 2014.

Cambridge, MA – The Boston Early Music Festival’s Grammy-nominated Artistic Directors **Paul O’Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** lead a North American tour of the BEMF Chamber Opera Series productions of **Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s *La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers*** and ***La Couronne de Fleurs*** to Victoria, British Columbia and New York City from March 14-18, 2014. These performances celebrate the March 2014 worldwide CD release of BEMF’s sixth Baroque opera recording—featuring the same repertoire, **Charpentier’s *La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers*** and ***La Couronne de Fleurs***—on the German label CPO (Classic Produktion Osnabrück). BEMF’s first three Baroque opera CDs on the CPO label—Conradi’s *Ariadne*, Lully’s *Thésée*, and Lully’s *Psyché*—all earned Grammy nominations in the Best Opera Recording category. This will be BEMF’s second North American tour featuring one its recent chamber opera productions, following the highly-successful spring 2011 tour of Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*.

WHEN: **Friday, March 14, 2014 at 8pm** and **Saturday, March 15, 2014 at 8pm**
McPherson Playhouse, 3 Centennial Square, Victoria, BC, Canada
Presented by Early Music Society of the Islands and Pacific Opera Victoria

Monday, March 17, 2014, at 7:30pm and **Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at 7:30pm**
Gilder Lehrman Hall at The Morgan Library & Museum
225 Madison Avenue at 36th Street, New York, NY

PROGRAM: **Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s**
***La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs*,**

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

TICKETS: *For Victoria:* Tickets are priced at **\$125, \$85, and \$65** and can be purchased from the McPherson Box Office at **250-386-6121** or **www.rmts.bc.ca**.

For New York City: Tickets are priced at **\$60 (\$50 for Morgan members)** and can be purchased at **www.themorgan.org/bemf** and **212-685-0008, ext. 560.**

TOUR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND NEW YORK CITY

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 BEMF Opera 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. In the staged 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. Jeremy Eichler of *The Boston Globe* praised the original November 2011 BEMF Chamber Opera Series production, writing, "the playing of the chamber ensemble had zest and polish in equal measure." In an encore performance of the production at BEMF's June 2013 Festival, James R. Oestreich of *The New York Times* called it "an evening of glorious music."

The Charpentier double bill will be led by three-time Grammy-nominated **BEMF Artistic 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 also appeared with BEMF in the Chamber Opera Series production of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* which toured North America in 2011. 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." Sheehan leads a vocal cast of favorites from past BEMF opera productions including **Mireille Asselin**, **Jesse Blumberg**, **Tyler Duncan**, **Jason McStoots**, **Danielle Reutter-Harrah**, **Carrie Henneman Shaw**, **Teresa Wakim**, **Brenna Wells**, and **Zachary Wilder**. They appear alongside four dancers from **BEMF's Baroque Dance Ensemble**, and the ten-member **BEMF Chamber Ensemble**, which will feature BEMF Orchestra Director **Robert Mealy** as concertmaster in the New York City performances.

BEMF'S SIXTH BAROQUE OPERA RECORDING FOR CPO

Only days after the conclusion of BEMF's June 2013 Festival, members of **BEMF's Vocal and Chamber Ensembles** travelled to the acoustically brilliant Sendesaal Studio in Bremen, Germany to make a recording of **Charpentier's La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers** and *La Couronne de Fleurs* for CPO (Classic Produktion Osnabrück). **BEMF Artistic Directors Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** led the recording which features many singers from past BEMF recordings, including **Aaron Sheehan**, **Amanda Forsythe**, **Teresa Wakim**, and **Mireille Lebel** as well as seven additional BEMF Vocal Ensemble members. **BEMF Orchestra Director Robert Mealy** served as concertmaster of the ten-member BEMF Chamber Ensemble and **BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin** served as Drama Coach. This recording will be released in March 2014, to coincide with BEMF's North American tour of the same repertoire.

In 2004, BEMF initiated a series of recordings to preserve its groundbreaking Baroque opera productions and attempt to fill the gaps in the current discography of Western opera. The first three CDs in BEMF's series earned Grammy nominations for Best Opera Recording. Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* and *La Couronne de Fleurs* is the third **BEMF Chamber Opera** release in this series following *Charpentier's Actéon* in 2010 and Blow's *Venus and Adonis* in 2011. A seventh release, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, is planned for 2015.

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 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 18th Boston Early Music Festival will take place from June 7–14, 2015, and will be highlighted by Claudio Monteverdi's trilogy of operas: *Orfeo*, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. BEMF's Artistic Leadership includes Artistic Directors **Paul O'Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs**, Opera Director **Gilbert Blin**, and Orchestra Director **Robert Mealy**.

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, with a world-renowned collection that ranges from Rembrandt to Picasso, Mozart to Bob Dylan, Dickens to Hemingway, and Gutenberg Bibles to Babar the elephant, The Morgan Library & Museum maintains a unique position among cultural institutions in New York, the nation, and the world. 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.

ABOUT THE EARLY MUSIC SOCIETY OF THE ISLANDS:

Based in Victoria, BC, the **Early Music Society of the Islands (EMSI)** is one of North America's most active and successful early music organizations. It was founded in 1985 to promote interest in historically-informed performances of music composed before 1800. EMSI presents an annual concert series of music from the middle ages to the early classical age from its home concert venue, the beautiful Alix Gooden Performance Hall. Each concert spotlights an internationally-acclaimed connoisseur of period music. The Society offers an early music bursary, arranges master classes with visiting artists, promotes the concerts of local musicians, and makes its period instruments available to the community. EMSI is 100% managed by dedicated volunteers.

ABOUT PACIFIC OPERA VICTORIA:

Pacific Opera Victoria (POV) has earned a reputation as one of Canada's leading opera companies, thanks to its dynamic repertoire choices, its original productions, and its commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for artists and audiences. Founded in 1979 and incorporated in 1980, POV has become one of Canada's most exciting arts institutions, with an audience that is, per capita, two to five times that of any other Canadian opera company. Pacific Opera Victoria builds opera from the ground up. Shaped by the creative vision of our directors and designers, each production is then built by our own team of production artists, staged in Victoria's beautiful, intimate Royal Theatre, and brought to life by a glorious collaboration of conductor and singers.

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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