

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 16, 2015

Boston Early Music Festival releases SEVENTH Baroque Opera CD, the world premiere studio recording of Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Tebe*

Soprano Karina Gauvin and countertenor Philippe Jaroussky headline the star-studded cast in BEMF's latest release in their GRAMMY-nominated series of Baroque Opera recordings. The 3-CD set is BEMF's first release for the Erato/Warner Classics label.

Cambridge, MA – The Boston Early Music Festival has released the world premiere studio recording of Agostino Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* on the Erato/Warner Classics label, with production support from Radio Bremen (Germany). Originally presented as the 2011 Festival Operatic Centerpiece, *Niobe* is the seventh in BEMF's series of Baroque Opera recordings that have earned four GRAMMY nominations for Best Opera Recording. The release is led by **BEMF Artistic Directors Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs** and features a stellar cast including soprano **Karina Gauvin** in the title role of Niobe and countertenor **Philippe Jaroussky** reprising his role as King Anfione from the original 2011 production. **BEMF Orchestra Director Robert Mealy** leads the 35 member BEMF Orchestra and **BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin** serves as Drama Coach.

Composed in 1688 and inspired by the mythological tale by Ovid, *Niobe* tells the tragic story of the Queen of Thebes and her husband Anfione. Consumed by hubris, Niobe mocked the gods who slay her children as punishment for her arrogance. Overwhelmed with grief, Anfione took his own life upon learning of the deaths. With her entire family gone, Niobe turned to stone, from which her tears now endlessly flow. BEMF's original production of *Niobe* was heralded by *The New York Times* as a "smorgasbord of mythology and mayhem". Philippe Jaroussky—in his North American stage debut—was singled out for particular acclaim, with *The Boston Phoenix* declaring he "won the audience with his beautiful singing, strong, clear tone, breathtaking technical bravura, and emotional nuance."

Alongside Mr. Jaroussky and Ms. Gauvin in an internationally-acclaimed cast are: **Amanda Forsythe** as Manto; **Christian Immler** as Tiresia; **Aaron Sheehan** as Clearte; **Terry Wey** as Creonte; **Jesse Blumberg** as Poliferno; **Colin Balzer** as Tiberino; and **José Lemos** as Nerea. BEMF will celebrate the release with a seven-city European tour, **January 18–31, 2015** with concert performances of Steffani's *Niobe, Regina di Tebe* in Madrid, Mérignac, Versailles, Paris, Amsterdam, Toulouse, and Dortmund.

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* has been nominated in this category for the 2015 GRAMMY Awards. An eighth recording, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, is planned for release later in 2015 on the German label CPO (Classic Produktion Osnabrück).

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 four 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: *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, and *Orfeo*. 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.

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