

Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival
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Boston Early Music Festival announces the Centerpiece Opera of the June 2019 Festival—the North American premiere of Agostino Steffani’s *Orlando*

Cambridge, MA—The **Boston Early Music Festival** will present the North American premiere of Agostino Steffani’s 1691 opera *Orlando generoso*, as the fully-staged operatic centerpiece of the June 2019 Boston Early Music Festival. This weeklong celebration of Early Music, themed *Dreams & Madness*, will be the 20th biennial Festival since the organization’s founding in 1981. GRAMMY-Winning Musical Directors **Paul O’Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** and internationally recognized Stage Director **Gilbert Blin** will lead this new production, in four (4) performances at the Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theatre, Boston—June 9–16, 2019. Tickets will go on sale during the summer of 2018.

“A dreamscape of enchanted castles and far-off lands.”

“Ludovico Ariosto’s 16th-century epic poem *Orlando furioso* was a rip-roaring tale of romance, intrigue, exoticism, and magic, and was as popular with Baroque audiences as *Game of Thrones* is today!” offers BEMF Artistic Co-Director Stephen Stubbs. “Steffani, in his most acclaimed opera, gave musical wings to this beloved tale and crafted one of opera’s earliest portraits of madness within a dreamscape of enchanted castles and far-off lands.”

Ariosto’s profound masterpiece deconstructed medieval myths of knights and dragons to explore deeply human themes of romance, jealousy, and madness against a fantastical backdrop. In Steffani’s *Orlando*, scandal and mystery follow the valiant knight Orlando as he ventures to China in search of his love, the princess Angelica. When his affection is spurned, he spirals into self-doubt and madness, all while a palace intrigue ensues, with a pair of estranged lovers, a lecherous king, and a scheming wizard. Steffani’s score displays his characteristic refined theatricality and virtuosity, full of deeply expressive arias and duets that dazzled audiences for the Hanover opera when it premiered in 1691. With enchanted castles, a luxurious foreign court, and winged beasts taking to the skies, *Orlando* promises to be a vivid entertainment sure to delight Boston audiences as well.

“*Orlando* stretched the boundaries of vocal and instrumental technique.”

“All of us at BEMF are thrilled to be returning to the work of Agostino Steffani, whose exquisite opera, *Niobe*, had such a profound impact on us from our staged performances in 2011 and subsequent, award-winning recording of the work released in 2015,” comments BEMF Artistic Co-Director Paul O’Dette. “*Orlando* stretched the boundaries of vocal and instrumental technique at the time, and required an all-star ensemble of Europe’s most virtuoso musicians to perform it.”

The Boston Early Music Festival's fully staged production of *Orlando* will feature gorgeous, period-inspired costumes, brilliant sets, breathtaking flying machines, and truly ravishing music. The magical drama comes alive with a cast of 9 outstanding singers including beloved BEMF favorites and critically acclaimed international luminaries making their eagerly anticipated BEMF debuts. Starring in the title role will be GRAMMY Award-winning tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, appearing in his eighth consecutive June Festival and hailed by *The New York Times* for his "shinning quality and deep sensitivity" for his appearance in the title role of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* at the 2015 Boston Early Music Festival. **Amanda Forsythe** returns for her seventh consecutive June Festival as the princess Angelica. Baritone **Jesse Blumberg** appears in his third Festival centerpiece opera as the scheming wizard Atalante. Polish countertenor **Kacper Szelażek** makes his BEMF debut as Medoro, the true love of Angelica, and Italian-born countertenor **Flavio Ferri-Benedetti** appears on the BEMF opera stage for the first time as the old king Galafro. Rounding out the announced cast is soprano **Teresa Wakim** as the honorable sorceress Melissa. Joining them will be the **Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra** led by Concertmaster **Robert Mealy** and the **Boston Early Music Festival Dance Company** under the supervision of Dance Director **Melinda Sullivan**.

The 2019 Boston Early Music Festival is presented with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, ConstellationCenter, WGBH Radio Boston, Harpsichord Clearing House, and The Gregory E. Bulger Foundation.

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**.

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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