

# Boston Early Music Festival

INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE OPERA • CELEBRATED CONCERTS • WORLD-FAMOUS EXHIBITION

Boston Early Music Festival  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Boston Early Music Festival announces two opera programs for the June 2019 Festival—a fully staged performance of Steffani’s *Orlando* and a selection of chamber operas by Charpentier and Lalande**

Cambridge, MA—Tickets are now on sale for two opera programs at the upcoming June 2019 Boston Early Music Festival. This weeklong celebration of Early Music, themed *Dreams & Madness*, will be the 20<sup>th</sup> biennial Festival since the organization’s founding in 1981. The centerpiece of the Festival will be the North American premiere of Agostino Steffani’s 1691 opera *Orlando generoso*, in a new, fully staged production for four performances at the Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theatre, Boston. BEMF will also present encore performances of its 2016 production of *VERSAILLES: Portrait of a Royal Domain*, a musical feast from the height of Louis XIV’s reign, featuring 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*. BEMF will present this production in performances at New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall in Boston and the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington in Western Massachusetts. Ticket packages are on sale now from the BEMF Box Office at 617-661-1812 or online at [www.BEMF.org](http://www.BEMF.org).

**“A constant delight of anticipation.” —*The Wall Street Journal***

### **STEFFANI: ORLANDO**

Based on Ludovico Ariosto’s 16th-century epic poem *Orlando furioso*, Steffani’s *Orlando* is a profound masterpiece that deconstructed medieval myths of knights and dragons to explore deeply human themes of romance, jealousy, and madness against a fantastical backdrop. In this captivating 1691 opera, 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 while a palace intrigue ensues, featuring a pair of estranged lovers, a lecherous king, and a scheming wizard. GRAMMY-Winning Musical Directors **Paul O’Dette** and **Stephen Stubbs** and internationally recognized Stage Director **Gilbert Blin** will lead this new production in four fully staged performances, June 9, 12, 14, and 16, 2019 at the Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theatre (219 Tremont Street, Boston, MA, USA). Ticket packages are available through the BEMF Box Office at 617-661-1812 or [www.BEMF.org](http://www.BEMF.org); individual tickets are available through the Box Office at the Emerson/Cutler Majestic Theatre at [cutlermajestic.org](http://cutlermajestic.org) or 617-824-8000.

“Ludovico Ariosto’s epic poem 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 Musical 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.”

The Boston Early Music Festival’s fully staged production of *Orlando* will feature magnificent, period-inspired costumes, brilliant sets, breathtaking flying machines, and truly ravishing music. Rounding out the directorial team will be Concertmaster **Robert Mealy** leading the **Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra**, Dance Director **Melinda Sullivan** supervising the **Boston Early Music Festival Dance Company**, Choreographer **Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière**, Set Designer **Gilbert Blin**, Costume Designer **Anna Watkins**, and Executive Producer **Kathleen Fay**. The magical drama comes alive with a cast of 9 outstanding singers including several BEMF favorites and critically acclaimed international luminaries making their eagerly anticipated BEMF débuts. Starring as Orlando 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. Soprano **Amanda Forsythe** returns for her seventh consecutive June Festival as the princess Angelica. Celebrated Hungarian soprano **Emőke Baráth** makes her BEMF opera début as the fierce heroine Bradamante, alongside countertenor **Christopher Lowrey** making his BEMF début as her lover, the faithful knight Ruggiero. Baritone **Jesse Blumberg** appears in his third Festival centerpiece opera as the scheming wizard Atalante. Polish countertenor **Kacper Szelażek** makes his BEMF début 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 Galafró. Rounding out the cast are two long-time BEMF favorites, tenor **Zachary Wilder** as the boastful thief Brunello and soprano **Teresa Wakim** as the honorable sorceress Melissa.

#### **VERSAILLES: PORTRAIT OF A ROYAL DOMAIN**

As King of France for over 72 years, Louis XIV oversaw a massive shift in the political and cultural life of French society. Among his accomplishments was the transformation of the pastoral hunting lodge at Versailles into a lavish palace that served as the seat of government and culture in France. *VERSAILLES: Portrait of a Royal Domain* is a spectacle 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*** features personifications of the courtly pleasures bickering for supremacy until the god of banquets restores the peace. The pleasures then usher in a selection of *divertissements* from **Lully’s *Atys***—a 1672 masterpiece 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.

**“Ravishingly sung and acted.” —*The Boston Globe***

The elegance and drama of these three works is brought to life by the all-star **BEMF Vocal and Chamber Ensembles** in a magnificent presentation featuring gorgeous costumes and sumptuous period staging, produced in partnership with the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles. Twelve singers and thirteen instrumentalists of the BEMF Vocal & Chamber Ensembles will be 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**. The first performance will take place at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall on Saturday, June 15, 2019 at 8pm. Tickets are available now through the BEMF Box Office at [www.BEMF.org](http://www.BEMF.org) or 617-661-1812. The following weekend, BEMF will present two additional performances: Friday, June 21, 2019 at 8pm and Saturday, June 22, 2019 at 3pm at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in the Berkshires (14 Castle Street, Great Barrington, MA, USA).

#### **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 20<sup>th</sup> 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**.

The 2019 Boston Early Music Festival is presented with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, WGBH Radio Boston, and Harpsichord Clearing House, as well as a number of generous foundations and individuals from around the world.

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

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