FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Boston Early Music Festival releases NEW Baroque Opera CD, featuring a chamber opera and other court entertainments from Versailles, by Michel-Richard de Lalande

Cambridge, MA – The Boston Early Music Festival has released its eleventh Baroque opera recording, featuring a chamber opera and other court entertainments from Versailles by Michel-Richard de Lalande, on the German label CPO (Classic Produktion Osnabrück). GRAMMY Award–winning Musical Directors Paul O’Dette and Stephen Stubbs and Concertmaster Robert Mealy lead the all-star Boston Early Music Festival Vocal and Chamber Ensembles in Lalande’s chamber opera Les Fontaines de Versailles and his secular cantata Le Concert d’Esculape. This release is the follow-up to the Boston Early Music Festival’s 2019 GRAMMY-nominated recording of Charpentier’s Les Plaisirs de Versailles and Les Arts Florissants. BEMF has enjoyed a celebrated history with French operas of the 17th century, winning the GRAMMY Award for Best Opera Recording and the ECHO Klassik Award for Opera Recording of the Year, 17th/18th Century for the 2014 release of Charpentier’s La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers and La Couronne de Fleurs.

On Thursday, September 24, 2020 at 7pm, BEMF will host a Virtual CD Release Party, featuring tracks from the CD, video clips from the 2016 staged production of Lalande’s Les Fontaines de Versailles, and special appearances from the cast and artistic team. Guests will hear from Paul O’Dette, Stephen Stubbs, BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin, Robert Mealy, Dance Director Melinda Sullivan, and GRAMMY Award-winning Recording Engineer Renate Wolter-Seever. Cast interviews include GRAMMY-winner Aaron Sheehan, Margot Rood, GRAMMY-nominee Jesse Blumberg, and John Taylor Ward. BEMF Executive Director Kathleen Fay will host the event and announce details for special giveaways during the broadcast.

Lalande: Les Fontaines de Versailles and Le Concert d’Esculape
A contemporary of Lully and Couperin, Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657–1726) spent over four decades in service of the French court. Both Les Fontaines de Versailles and Le Concert d’Esculape were written in 1683, the same year the young Lalande took up a new post for King Louis XIV. Written just one year after Louis XIV had moved the French court to Versailles, Les Fontaines de Versailles honors this new era with a meeting of the deities depicted in sculpture around the many fountains adorning the chateau’s gardens. Esculape sings the praises of the Greek god of medicine, Asclepius, as tribute to the court doctor who had successfully treated the wife of the King’s eldest son and heir. The CD also features an instrumental selection—Grande Pièce en G-Ré-Sol—from Lalande’s Symphonies pour les soupers du Roy.
In January of 2019, BEMF artists departed Boston for Bremen, Germany, and the acoustically superb Sendesaal (former site of Radio Bremen) for thirteen days of rehearsal and recording. The disc features BEMF favorites tenor Aaron Sheehan, baritone Jesse Blumberg, and soprano Margot Rood. The stellar cast also includes 2020 GRAMMY-nominees Teresa Wakim and Virginia Warnken, as well as Jason McStoots, Molly Netter, Sophie Michaux, John Taylor Ward, Brian Giebler, and Olivier Laquerre. Concertmaster Robert Mealy leads the eleven-member BEMF Chamber Ensemble, while BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin serves as Drama Coach, and Kathleen Fay serves as Executive Producer for the CD.

ABOUT THE BEMF RECORDING PROJECT
With the goal of capturing the exceptional work of the Baroque Opera Project, BEMF initiated an effort to record its acclaimed Baroque Operas in 2005. This commitment to preservation has produced nine celebrated opera recordings and attracted the attention of the international community in the form of numerous awards and accolades, including a GRAMMY Award for Best Opera Recording for our 2014 CD release of Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers and La Couronne de Fleurs and five more GRAMMY nominations. BEMF recordings have also been nominated for—and won—ECHO Klassik awards, Gramophone awards, the Diapason d’Or de l’Année, and Gramophone magazine’s Recording of the Month. BEMF’s next CD—Graupner’s Antiochus und Stratonica—will be released on the CPO label in late 2020.

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 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 five 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 weeklong Festival and Exhibition recognized as the “world’s leading festival of early music” (The Times, London). 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 Boston Early Music Festival is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, National Endowment for the Arts, Constellation Charitable Foundation, and WGBH Radio Boston, as well as a number of generous foundations and individuals from around the world.

For more information, please contact Kathleen Fay at kathy@bemf.org.

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