FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Boston Early Music Festival releases NEW world-premiere Baroque Opera CD: Christoph Graupner's *Antiochus und Stratonica*

Cambridge, MA – The Boston Early Music Festival has released its twelfth Baroque opera recording, Christoph Graupner’s 1708 *Antiochus und Stratonica*, on the German label CPO (Classic Produktion Osnabrück). GRAMMY Award–winning Musical Directors Paul O’Dette and Stephen Stubbs and Concertmaster Robert Mealy lead an outstanding cast and the all-star Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra in this never-before-recorded work.

"We have wanted to share this stunning opera with you for many years now, but our history with *Antiochus und Stratonica* has not been without its trials," says Executive Director Kathleen Fay. "The modern premiere of this remarkable work was to have been the centerpiece of our 2009 Festival until the 2008 global financial crisis necessitated a change of plans, and the recording was completed mere weeks before the coronavirus dramatically changed our lives and our artistic operations. However, with the music making and the travelling completed, not even a global pandemic could stop us from sharing this gorgeous music with you."

Written when Graupner was only 25, *Antiochus und Stratonica* reveals a young composer of astonishing musical and dramatic maturity. With a rich and inventive libretto by Barthold Feind woven around a melancholy love story, the score carries an emotional atmosphere that crosses into territory more often associated with oratorio. In particular, the sufferings of Antiochus seem to call forth a quasi-religious response. A master of delicately balanced instrumental colors, Graupner offers the listener an absolutely inexhaustible supply of fresh sounds and discoveries with his kaleidoscopic array of ever-changing instrumentation.

In January of 2020, BEMF artists gathered in Bremen, Germany at the acoustically superb Sendesaal (former site of Radio Bremen) for fourteen days of rehearsal and recording. This world-premiere recording stars BEMF favorite baritone Christian Immler as Syrian prince Antiochus, who falls hopelessly in love with his beautiful new stepmother, Stratonica, performed by brilliant Czech soprano Hana Blažíková in her BEMF Opera début. The dazzling cast also features GRAMMY-winning tenor Aaron Sheehan, GRAMMY nominees bass Harry van der Kamp, soprano Sunhae Im, baritone Jesse Blumberg, and tenor Jan Kobow, as well as soprano Sherezade Panthaki. Bremen’s own Capella Ansgarii fills the role of the chorus. GRAMMY-winner Renate Wolter-Severs returns as Recording Producer, BEMF Opera Director Gilbert Blin serves as Drama Coach, and Kathleen Fay serves as Executive Producer for the project.
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.

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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