FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 11, 2021

Boston Early Music Festival announces plans for an all-virtual 2021 Festival

Cambridge, MA – The 21st biennial Boston Early Music Festival will be presented exclusively online, from June 6–13, 2021. The virtual event—titled Music of Solace and Joy—will feature a combination of new broadcasts from BEMF’s operatic video archives, recorded concert performances from the world’s leading Early Music Artists, an Exhibition, Fringe Series, Masterclasses, and more. BEMF’s Artistic Leadership team of Artistic Directors Paul O’Dette and Stephen Stubbs, Opera Director Gilbert Blin, Orchestra Director Robert Mealy, and Dance Director Melinda Sullivan will work closely with Executive Director Kathleen Fay in the coming weeks and months to plan a full schedule of events for audiences to enjoy in their own homes.

“We have had to make some extremely difficult decisions amid unfolding plans made over the last several years, and in an atmosphere of widely variant scenarios on the potential future of the pandemic and possible vaccines,” says BEMF Executive Director Kathleen Fay. “We identified three options: to cancel or drastically reduce the traditional live Festival; to gamble on proceeding as usual, hoping for safe, highly effective, and rapidly and extensively distributed vaccines; or to prioritize the health and safety of our artists, staff, and fans, mounting for the first time and in this unique, unprecedented year, an equally unique and unprecedented virtual Boston Early Music Festival and Exhibition. With trepidation, we have chosen the third option.”

The virtual 2021 Festival replaces previously announced plans for a new production of the GRAMMY Award–winning BEMF Chamber Opera Series featuring Telemann’s Pippinone and Hasse’s La Finta Tedesca, as well as earlier plans for a fully staged production of Desmarest’s Circé. Both productions will be rescheduled in the future.

The move to a virtual presentation of the 2021 Festival follows BEMF’s move to online broadcasts during the 2020–2021 Season. During the fall of 2020, BEMF presented four streaming performances: exclusive concert videos from beloved ensembles Nevermind and The Tallis Scholars, and a Thanksgiving weekend event from the GRAMMY Award–winning BEMF Chamber Opera Series, featuring broadcasts of two chamber opera productions inspired by the Orpheus legend. All four broadcasts were presented free of charge for a limited time on BEMF’s YouTube channel (youtube.com/bostoneyearly) attracting thousands of viewers from around the world. Plans are underway to present three more virtual concerts in the months leading up to the June 2021 Festival.

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 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). 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 617-661-1812 or email kathy@bemf.org.

###