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Odyssey Opera Begins its 2019-20 Season: The Tudors with Camille Saint-Saëns's *Henry VIII*

What: *Henry VIII* by Camille Saint-Saëns

When: Saturday, September 21, 2019, at 7:30 p.m.

Where: New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall, 30 Gainsborough Street,
Boston, MA | T: Green to Symphony, Orange to Mass Ave

Tickets: \$25 and Up. To purchase, visit odysseyopera.org
or call 617.826.1626.

BOSTON, MA (For Release 07.18.19) — One of the nation's most adventurous opera companies, **Odyssey Opera**, begins its seventh season with a concert performance of *Henry VIII* (1883) by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns based on *El cisma en Inglaterra* (*The schism in England*) by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. This kick-starts the company's 2019-20 season featuring concert and staged operas about the great English dynasty of the 16th century: the Tudors. With libretto by Léonce Détroyat and Armand Silvestre, *Henry VIII* brings to life one of history's most infamous love triangles featuring baritone Michael Chioldi as King Henry, soprano Ellie Dehn as Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and mezzo-soprano Hilary Ginther as Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn.

Dedicated to performing neglected works, Odyssey Opera resurrects this little known and intensely powerful work. It premiered in 1883 and received its North American premiere 100 years later in 1983. "*Henry VIII* has all the ingredients of a spectacular grand opera," says **Gil Rose**, Odyssey Opera's Artistic and General Director. "It has a sensational historical subject and sweeping vocal melodies and rich orchestral writing. As often happens, much of the real meat of the opera was cut during the initial production. We are thrilled to be working with renowned Saint-Saëns scholar, Hugh MacDonald, to recreate *Henry VIII* as the composer intended. This is a performance that, for all intents and purposes, represents the world premiere!"

As Saint-Saëns's fifth of 11 operas, *Henry VIII* focuses on the earlier phases of the monarch's troubles with his wives and Rome. Henry is determined to divorce Catherine of Aragon in favor of the beautiful, ambitious Anne Boleyn. The opera contrasts this Great Affair of the English monarch against the public spectacle of the English court. Saint-Saëns's score brilliantly invokes

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an early Renaissance sensibility replete with period English melodies and Elizabethan court music while remaining firmly rooted in the French grand opera tradition.

Performing the title role of the second Tudor king, Henry VIII, is baritone **Michael Chioldi**. No stranger to Odyssey Opera, Chioldi made his company debut in the 2014 production of Verdi's *Un Giorno di Regno*. According to *Opera News*, "Michael Chioldi stood firmly at the center of the evening as Belfiore, the counterfeit king, possessing a powerful and gorgeously rich baritone voice ideally suited to Verdi." He returned in 2015 for Odyssey's productions of Vaughan Williams's *Sir John in Love* and Jules Massenet's *Le Cid*. Playing Catherine of Aragon is **Ellie Dehn** — her "melting yet clear soprano" impressed *The New York Times* when she portrayed Catherine with "eloquence and power" at Bard SummerScape 2012. **Hilary Ginther** brings her "substantial and richly colored instrument (*Opera Now*)" to the stage as the ill-fated Anne Boleyn. Ginther was profiled in *Opera Now* (May 2016) as one of the Top 10 young American singers intent on taking the opera world by storm.

Following the season-opening concert, Odyssey Opera's 2019-20 season continues with the fully-staged production of *Maria, Regina d'Inghilterra* (1843) by Giovanni Pacini (November 1 and 3, 2019). Odyssey ushers in 2020 with the world premiere of Arnold Rosner's *The Chronicle of Nine*, a semi-staged co-production with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project (February 1, 2020) followed by the fully-staged production of *Elisabetta, Regina d'Inghilterra* (1815) by Rossini Neapolitan (March 13 and 15, 2020). The season ends with two operas from the 20th century: *Gloriana* (1953) by Benjamin Britten (April 11, 2020) and *Merrie England* (1902) by Edward German (June 5 and 7, 2020).

About Odyssey Opera

Founded in 2013 by artistic director/conductor Gil Rose, Odyssey Opera presents adventurous and eclectic works that affirm opera as a powerful expression of the human experience. Its world-class artists perform the operatic repertoire from its historic beginnings through lesser-known masterpieces to contemporary new works and commissions in varied formats and venues. Odyssey Opera sets standards of high musical and theatrical excellence and innovative programming to advance the operatic genre beyond the familiar and into undiscovered territory. Odyssey Opera takes its audience on a journey to places they've never been before. odysseyopera.org

Saint-Saëns: *Henry VIII*

Henry VIII: Michael Chioldi (baritone)

Catherine of Aragon: Ellie Dehn (soprano)

Anne Boleyn: Hilary Ginther (mezzo-soprano)

Don Gomez de Feria: Yeghishe Manucharyan (tenor)

Duke of Norfolk: Kristopher Irmiter (bass-baritone)

Earl of Surrey: Matthew DiBattista (tenor)

Conductor: Gil Rose

Odyssey Opera Orchestra and Chorus

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For more information, visit OdysseyOpera.org

To download cast bios, photos, and more, visit
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/okr1kgt3z0x8l3r/AADZL-kFWwqKH0WpbBPU8_5Ka?dl=0.

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