

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**operamission** will present the North American professional stage premiere of G. F. Handel's first opera, *ALMIRA, Königin von Castilien*, at the Gershwin Hotel in New York May 26, 29 and 31, 2012.

NEW YORK, New York (April 23, 2012) - **operamission** and Neke Carson will present the North American professional stage premiere of Georg Friedrich Händel's three-act opera, *ALMIRA, Königin von Castilien* (*ALMIRA, Queen of Castile*) HWV 1, composed in Hamburg, Germany in 1704 when the composer was nineteen, at the **Gershwin Hotel** for three performances at **7:30 PM** on **Saturday, May 26, Tuesday, May 29, and Thursday, May 31, 2012.**

*ALMIRA*, Handel's first opera, premièred in Hamburg on January 8, 1705 with great success, has never before been professionally produced outside of Germany and Austria. The libretto by Friedrich Christian Feustking is a German translation of an Italian libretto from 1691 by Giulio Pancieri (*L'Almira*). **operamission** will present the opera in its original German and Italian, staged with baroque orchestra. **Jennifer Peterson** conducts from the harpsichord, **Jeff Caldwell** directs.

The spectacular cast will be led by soprano **Christy Lombardozzi** as the Queen Almira and baritone **Michael Weyandt** as the 'orphan' Fernando, her Secretary and secret love. Joined by tenor **Keith Jameson** (Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago) as Osman and soprano **Nell Snaidas** (Boston Early Music Festival, Grammy nominee) as Edilia, 'a royal princess,' the cast also features soprano **Kristen Plumley** (Bellante), tenor **Karim Sulayman** (Tabarco), baritone **David Kravitz** (Raymondo), and bass **Mark Risinger** (Consalvo).

An exemplary model of the formulaic structures and conventions of *opera seria*, the story of *ALMIRA* was possibly a fictionalized retelling of the betrothal story of Queen Isabella I of Castile to Ferdinand II of Aragon, with parallels to actual historical events of the 1460s in Valladolid, Spain, the setting of the opera. Dozens of Handelian musical gems can be found charmingly budding in the arias, ensembles, and dances of this early work.

**operamission**, bringing the art form 'from the composer to the audience,' has established its artistic presence in the New York classical music scene with fifteen presentations since March of 2009. Presenting opera both of today and the past, **operamission's** productions have ranged from concerts of Handel opera with period instruments to fully-staged operatic world premieres. Live videostreaming of **operamission's** innovative programming has also exposed opera, art song, chamber music, and popular cabaret evenings of Francis Poulenc and Kurt Weill to international audiences. The groundbreaking presentation of 'Cosi fan tutte: Some Assembly Required' in August 2010 put the troupe on the map with its dynamic format, enriching audience awareness of opera as an accessible and vital genre.

The **Gershwin Hotel** is located at 7 East 27<sup>th</sup> Street in New York, just east of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Flatiron District. Tickets are \$30-60 and are available in advance at [Brown Paper Tickets](#) and at the door. All performances begin at 7:30 PM.

**Contact:**

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