

Benjamin Bagby

Web sites: www.sequentia.org & www.BagbyBeowulf.com

Date of birth: 20 February, 1951

Place of birth: Evanston, Illinois (USA)

Citizenship: USA

Education

B.M., Oberlin College Conservatory of Music (voice), 1974.

B.A., Oberlin College (German literature), 1974.

Diplom für Musik des Mittelalters, Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (Basel, Switzerland), 1977.

Professional Activities

- Vocalist, tour manager and research assistant, New York Pro Musica Antiqua, 1972-74.
- Vocalist, Studio der Frühen Musik (dir. Thomas Binkley), 1975-77.
- Co-founder & co-director (since 1999 sole director), vocalist and harpist: Sequentia (ensemble for medieval music), 1977–present.
- Created over 65 innovative concert programs of medieval music and music drama, giving performances in Western and Eastern Europe, North and South America, Africa, the Middle East, Japan, Korea, and Australia. Sequentia performs 15 to 30 concerts yearly, developing 1-2 new programs each year.
- Recordings (LP and CD): over two dozen (see discography), 1981–present.
- Numerous recordings with European radio and television, 1978-2005. The booklets which accompany these recordings are of a high scholarly quality. Mr. Bagby has collaborated with such philologists as Peter Dronke, Pierre Bec, Ulrich Müller, Heimir Palsson and Laurence Moulinier, and with musicologists such as Leo Treitler, Edward Roesner, Hartmut Möller and Richard Crocker.
- Sequentia's recent CD releases, *Edda: Myths from Medieval Iceland*, *The Rheingold Curse*, and *Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper* were based solely on the research of Benjamin Bagby, reflecting his interest in oral poetry and the use of traditional music in reconstructing ancient modal vocabularies.
- In addition, the ensemble has been dedicated to teaching intensive summer courses in medieval music performance. The most important of these is the two-week course taught yearly (since 1984) at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Of the more than 200 students who have attended this advanced course over the years, more than 20 have gone on to become members of Sequentia or of other professional ensembles.
- Director, Sons of Thunder, Sequentia's male vocal ensemble for the performance of medieval liturgical polyphony and chant (1988-2002).

Solo Performances

Since 1990, Benjamin Bagby has been actively involved in the reconstruction of medieval oral epics. He has performed in Old Icelandic, Old High German, and Anglo-Saxon, accompanying himself on a 6-string Germanic harp. His acclaimed bardic performance of *Beowulf*, with 10-20 performances yearly worldwide (for details and press see www.BagbyBeowulf.com), will be filmed and released as a DVD in 2006.

Sequentia Awards and Grants

Innsbrucker Radiopreis (1981)

Deutscher Schallplattenpreis (for *Vox Iberica*, 1993)

Netherlands' Edison Awards (for Hildegard von Bingen, 1987 and 1998)

Disque d'Or (1996) for 100,000 copies of the disc *Canticles of Ecstasy* sold in France

Diapason d'Or (1995 and 1999)

Grammy Nomination for Best Choral Recording (Hildegard von Bingen, 1996)

Research grants from the Siemens Foundation (Germany) and from the Volkswagen Foundation (in association with research residencies at the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, Germany)

Music Theatre Projects

Hildegard von Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* (West German Television, 1982, and tours in 1984, 1986, 1990, and 1998-9)

Heinrich von Meissen's *Frauenleich* (Frankfurter Feste, 1987, 1994, and recording, 1990)

Cividale *Planctus Marie* (West German Radio, 1985; Boston Early Music Festival)

Bordesholmer Marienklage (West German TV, 1992);

Edda Eins (performed as a theatrical production 1995-7 in Scandinavia, North America and Africa under the auspices of the Goethe Institute)

A completely new Edda project premiered in 2001 with performances of the Eddic poems which formed the basis of the Rheingold Saga. For this project, commissioned by the Lincoln Center Festival and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Mr. Bagby collaborated with the NY stage director Ping Chong. Performances in Utrecht Early Music Festival and University of Maryland (2001), Perth Festival (Australia) and the Faroe Islands (2002), and further US tours in 2002 and 2003. Released worldwide as a double CD in 2002: *The Rheingold Curse* (see www.aurel.de).

Publications

Researching and writing more than 65 Sequentia programs for festivals and concert series.

Writing (sometimes co-authoring, with Barbara Thornton) more than two dozen CD booklets

“Imagining the Early Medieval Harp”, contribution to a book of essays on medieval music performance practice, *A Performer’s Guide to Medieval Music* (IU Press, 2000) edited by Ross W. Duffin.

Contributions to the journals *Early Music America* (summer, 2002), *Early Music* (1987), the Polish early music quarterly *Canor* (2003), the Spanish/French early music magazine *Goldberg* (1998) and the Medieval Academy *Newsletter* (2005).

„*Beowulf*, die *Edda* und die Aufführung mittelalterlichen Epik. Anmerkungen aus der Werkstatt eines rekonstruierend rekonstruierten „Geschichten-Sängers““, in *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, 2002.

‘*Beowulf*, the *Edda*, and the Performance of Medieval Epic: Notes from the Workshop of a Reconstructed ‘Singer of Tales’. Contribution to *Performing Medieval Narrative*, eds. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Cambridge, D. S. Brewer, 2005).

Teaching (as Guest Lecturer or Professor) and Jury Membership

Currently on the faculty of Université de Sorbonne, Paris IV, where he teaches in the Master’s program (performance practice of medieval music).

Schola Cantorum Basiliensis (Basel, Switzerland) teaching and also jury member

Vancouver (Canada) Summer Medieval Music Course, (yearly, 1984-2002)

Autunno Musicale (Como, Italy)

Bodky Award (Boston) jury member

Modus Centrum (Oslo, Norway)

Amherst Early Music (Amherst College & Tufts University, MA)

University of Texas at Austin

Northwestern University (Evanston, IL)

New England Conservatory of Music (Boston, MA)

Sarah Lawrence College (Bronxville, NY)

St. John's College (Santa Fe, NM)

University of Illinois (Champagne/Urbana, IL)

Tilburgs Konservatorium (Tilburg, NL) jury member

Duke University (Raleigh, NC)

Royaumont Foundation (France)

Stanford University (Palo Alto, CA)

Studio Alte Musik (Berlin)

University of California at Santa Barbara (CA)

Royal Conservatory Copenhagen

Jaroslaw Early Music Festival (Poland)

New York University, 2000

Illinois Wesleyan University (Bloomington, IL) May Term guest lecturer, 2001
Notre Dame de Paris (jury member for Gregorian chant exams: 2003, 2004)
Musique et Danse en Bretagne (with Katarina Livljanic, 2004)
Vassar College, (NY) 2004
University of Chicago (IL), 2005

Awards and Teaching/Research Fellowships

- Thomas J. Watson Foundation Fellowship (for the study of medieval song performance in Europe and the Middle East) 1974-75
- Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland) Krieger Fellow, 2000
- Indiana University School of Music (Bloomington, IN) Patten Lecturer, 2001
- University of Michigan Humanities Fellowship, 2001
- Harvard University: Center for the Study of World Religions (Fortieth Anniversary Fellowship), together with Katarina Livljanic [director of Dialogos]: 2003
- University of Oregon School of Music (Trotter Visiting Professor) 2004-5

Sequentia Discography

These include productions of medieval music for which Benjamin Bagby was either musical director or musical co-director (with Barbara Thornton). Almost all releases are on the Deutsche Harmonia Mundi label:

1. Spielmann und Kleriker (LP, 1981)
2. Hildegard von Bingen, *Ordo Virtutum* (2 LPs, 1982)
3. Spruchdichtung des 13. Jahrhunderts (LP, 1983)
4. Hildegard von Bingen: Sinfoniae (LP, 1983)
5. Trouveres (3 LPs, 1984)
6. English Songs of the Middle Ages (LP, 1986)
7. Phillipe le Chancelier / School of Notre Dame (CD, 1987)
8. Philippe de Vitry: Motets and Chansons (CD, 1988)
9. Vox Iberica I: Sons of Thunder / Music for St. James the Apostle (CD, 1989)
10. Vox Iberica II: Codex Las Huelgas (CD, 1990)
11. Vox Iberica III: El Sabio (CD, 1991)
12. *Bordesholmer Marienklage* (2 CDs, 1992)
13. Oswald von Wolkenstein: Lieder (CD, 1993)
14. Hildegard von Bingen: Canticles of Ecstasy (CD, 1993)
15. Dante and the Troubadours (CD, 1994)

16. Hildegard von Bingen: O Jerusalem (CD, 1994)
17. Hildegard von Bingen: Voice of the Blood (CD, 1995)
18. Hildegard von Bingen: Saints (2 CDs, 1996)
19. Shining Light: Christmas Music from Aquitanian Monasteries (CD, 1996)
20. Aquitania: Christmas Music from Aquitanian Monasteries (CD, 1997)
21. Hildegard von Bingen: *Ordo Virtutum* [new production] (2 CDs, 1998)
22. *Edda*: Myths from Medieval Iceland (CD, 1999)
23. Frauenlob: In Praise of the Celestial Woman (CD, recorded 1990, released 2000)
24. The Rheingold Curse: A Germanic Saga from the Medieval Icelandic *Edda* (2 CDs, 2002)
25. (released by Marc Aurel Edition / Cologne, Germany)
26. 'With Voice & Pen'. [major participation in an anthology CD recording of medieval song to accompany a book-length collection of the collected writings on medieval music by musicologist Leo Treitler: 'With Voice & Pen' (Oxford UP, 2004)]
27. Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper (CD, recorded 2002; released in 2004 by BMG Classics / DHM label)
28. Krone und Schleier (Crown and Veil: Music from Medieval Female Monasteries) Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Recorded in 2004; release in 2005. [this was a special recording made to accompany a major German exhibition of medieval art from women's monasteries in Bonn and Essen.]
29. Chant Wars [in collaboration with the ensemble Dialogos, directed by Katarina Livljanic], Sony-BMG, DHM label. Recorded in 2004; release in autumn 2005.