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MEDIEVAL MUSIC ENSEMBLE SEQUENTIA RECREATES THE *LOST SONGS OF A RHINELAND HARPER* AT CAL PERFORMANCES SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23 AT 7:00 P.M.

“Sequentia ranks among the noblest and most active of the very-early-music performing groups ... A splendid evening, all told, of music to revel in—and to think about”—*L.A. Weekly*

SIGHTLINES: Pre-performance talk will be given by Sequentia’s founder and leader Benjamin Bagby at 6:00 p.m.

BERKELEY, September 16, 2005 – The “extraordinary” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*) medieval music group, **Sequentia**, appears in **Hertz Hall** on **Sunday, October 23 at 7:00 p.m.** as part of Cal Performances’ Centennial Season. Sequentia is known for its dramatic and occasionally ribald interpretations of medieval music. Directed by noted performer and musicologist **Benjamin Bagby**, the four-member Sequentia will perform 18 songs from tenth- and eleventh-century Europe under the rubric *Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper*. Many of these songs are reconstructions of pieces from a collection of Latin and German songs found in a medieval manuscript, copied by Anglo-Saxon monks in the Abbey of St. Augustine in Canterbury and now kept at the library of Cambridge University. Playing period instruments, the ensemble includes Benjamin Bagby (vocals, lyre and harp), **Agnethe Christensen** (vocals), **Eric Mentzel** (vocals), and **Norbert Rodenkirchen** (flute and lyre). Supertitles will supply translations.

PROGRAM

Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper come from a milieu of learned, aristocratic churchmen in the Rhineland, where 1,000 years ago cities such as Cologne, Mainz, Worms, and Speyer were centers of culture and power in Germany. The texts display an intimate working knowledge of music, voice, and instruments—especially the harp and flute. Evidence strongly suggests that the source of the Canterbury manuscript, lost long ago, was the repertoire of a learned *citharista*—a bilingual harpist/singer from the Rhineland who performed for aristocratic bishops, their courts, powerful abbots, secular nobility including the kaiser’s court, and young

-MORE-

clerical intelligentsia. Sequentia's program combines reconstructions from the Canterbury manuscript with some of the earliest known musical manuscripts of European song to give a glimpse into this long-lost world.

The concert is organized into six sections, each comprised of one to six songs. The first half of the program has three sections: "An Ode to Cosmic Harmony" includes a song from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*; "The Image of Dawn" presents five songs that consider the magic moment between night and day; and "Songs of the Harp" covers four works centered on the instrument. After intermission, Sequentia returns with another three sections: "The Harper in the Underworld," presents a second song taken from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*; "The Harper in the Snakepit" consists of a song that recounts the earliest version of the famous Rhineland tale of greed, betrayal, and murder, *Atli sendi ar til Gunnars*; and finally, "Desire and Seduction" is made up of six songs powerfully influenced by of the erotic dreamlike language of *Song of Songs*.

SEQUENTIA

Sequentia is among the world's most respected and innovative medieval music ensembles. Founded in 1977 by Benjamin Bagby, the current director, and the late Barbara Thornton, Sequentia boasts more than a quarter-century's experience of international tours, bringing to life over sixty innovative concert programs that encompass the entire spectrum of medieval music. The group has a comprehensive discography spanning the entire Middle Ages (including the complete works of Hildegard von Bingen), film and television productions of medieval music and drama, and a legacy of young medieval music performers trained by members of the ensemble. In addition, Sequentia have created music-theater projects such as Hildegard von Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum*, the Cividale *Planctus Marie*, *Bordesholmer Marienklage*, and Heinrich von Meissen's *Frauenleich*. Sequentia's work is divided between a small touring group of vocal and instrumental soloists, and a larger ensemble, based in Paris, of voices for chant and polyphony performances.

Sequentia has received numerous prizes worldwide for its more than two dozen recordings on the Deutsche Harmonia Mundi label. These include a *Disque d'Or*, several *Diapasons d'Or*, two Edison Prizes, the *Deutsche Schallplattenpreis*, and a Grammy nomination. In 2002, Sequentia received acclaim for its double-CD release of the Icelandic medieval set of tales *Edda: The Rheingold Curse* on the independent Marc Aurel Edition label. A recording of this program, *Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper*, was released on the DHM label—for which the ensemble now records exclusively—in 2004, winning wide critical acclaim. The *Classica/Repertoire* raves: “In its choice of texts, but also in its research and its musical reconstructions, [Sequentia] installs itself in a universe much more refined, and also much more jubilant.”

BENJAMIN BAGBY

Vocalist, lyre player, harpist and scholar **Benjamin Bagby**, who was captivated by medieval music as a teenager, has been an important figure in its performance for over 25 years. Aside from directing Sequentia, Bagby gives solo performances of Anglo-Saxon and Old-Icelandic oral poetry, and performs his acclaimed bardic re-telling of *Beowulf* worldwide. In addition to researching and writing about medieval performance practice, he has been a guest lecturer and professor, teaching courses and workshops in Europe and North America.

Other members of Sequentia include Swedish vocalist **Agnethe Christensen** who is a graduate of the Royal Danish Conservatory, a Renaissance and medieval singing student of Andrea von Ramm in Basel and the leader of her own medieval music group, Alba; Philadelphia-born vocalist **Eric Mentzel**, who is a student of voice and organ at Temple University, who holds a M.A. in early music performance practice from Sarah Lawrence College, has appeared on more than 25 recordings and is a faculty member at the University of Oregon; and **Norbert Rodenkirchen** (flute and lyre), a versatile performer, composer, and

musical director in theater, radio and on recordings, and who is a co-founder of the early-music ensemble Diphona.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Sequentia** on **Sunday, October 23** at **7:00 p.m.** in Hertz Hall are priced at **\$42.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

The *Contra Costa Times* and Classical 102.1 KDFC are season media sponsors of the 2005/06 performing arts season.

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(Sequentia calendar information on next page)

-MORE-

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Sunday, October 23 at 6:00 p.m.
SIGHTLINES

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way At Telegraph, Berkeley

Pre-performance talk with **Benjamin Bagby**, Director of Sequentia. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post-performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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Sunday, October 23 at 7:00 p.m.

Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Music Before 1850

Sequentia

Benjamin Bagby, director, vocals, lyre & harp

Agneth Christensen, vocals

Eric Mentzel, vocals

Norbert Rodenkirchen, flute & lyre

Program

Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper

I. An Ode to Cosmic Harmony

Anon/ "Quod mundus stabili fide"

II. The Image of Dawn

Anon/"Cigni," "Foebus abierat," "Clangam, filii," "Phebi claro," "Aurea personet lira"

III. Songs of the Harp

Anon/ "Caute cane, cantor care," "Magnus Cesar Otto," "Rota modos arte," "David Reges inclita proles"

IV. The Harper in the Underworld

Anon/"Felix qui potuit boni"

V. The Harper in the Snakepit

Anon/"Atli sendi ar til Gunnars"

VI. Desire and Seduction

Anon/"Iam, dulcis amica, venito," "Advertite, omnes populi," "O admirabile Veneris idolum," "Puella turbata," "Suavissima nunna," "Veni, dilectissime"

Tickets: \$42.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.