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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 15, 2010

**VOCALIST AND HARPIST BENJAMIN BAGBY BRINGS  
*BEOWULF: THE EPIC IN PERFORMANCE*  
TO ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE OCTOBER 26 - 30 AT 8:00 P.M.**

**Artist's Talk: Benjamin Bagby and Dr. Stefan Morent discuss the reconstruction and performance of medieval works on Friday, October 29 at noon in Zellerbach Playhouse.**

**BERKELEY, September 15, 2010**—Cal Performances presents musician and scholar **Benjamin Bagby** in five performances of the medieval tale of *Beowulf: The Epic in Performance* in Zellerbach Playhouse **Tuesday through Saturday, October 26 to 30, at 8:00 p.m.** Bagby, who recites the *Beowulf* story in its original Anglo-Saxon language (with English supertitles) and accompanies himself on Anglo-Saxon harp, uses a rich kit of dramatic tools including facial gestures, vocal swoops and whispers, to enliven his performance of this ancient story of heroism, sacrifice, and bravery. Bagby's performance of *Beowulf* is "a triumphant demonstration of the power of storytelling and our deep-seated need to share stories" (*Guardian Unlimited*, Manchester, UK).

In a related **Artist's Talk**, Bagby and **Dr. Stefan Morent** of Tuebingen University in Germany will meet in Zellerbach Playhouse on **Friday, October 29 at 12:00 p.m.** to discuss the reconstruction and performance of medieval works. This conversation is presented in association with the UC Berkeley Committee on Medieval Studies and Center for British Studies, and is free and open to the public.

Benjamin Bagby's performance of *Beowulf* is simultaneously musically deft, theatrically exciting, and historically informed. Although he is a trained singer, Bagby has said that, when performing *Beowulf*, "I enter with my voice into a world which is informed as much by the actor's art as by the singer's." The *British Theatre Guide* called his performance, "a hybrid of song and recitation," and the *Berkshire Review for the Arts* said, "Bagby has bridged the language gap and made it possible for modern audiences to share something like the enjoyment a medieval scop's audience would have experienced in a bardic performance."

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## ***BEOWULF***

The Anglo-Saxon poem called *Beowulf* is found as a single, unique manuscript, dating back to the early eleventh century, and is now housed in the British Library. The written tale of *Beowulf* that survives represents only one version—and perhaps not the best version—of a story that developed in an always-changing oral tradition centuries ago. Scholars disagree on the age of the poem itself—some have suggested that it could have been created as early as the sixth century—but most agree that the story arose among the bardic storytellers, or *scops*, who were essential elements of tribal society in early medieval England. Contemporaneous accounts say that *scops* told their stories in song and speech, self-accompanied on six-stringed harps. (Musical notation was not used at the time, and only fragments of such instruments survive.) In its day, every performance of *Beowulf*—like any bardic performance—would be unique, subtle, and tuned to its audience.

The epic poem tells the heroic story of a young warrior named Beowulf and the three battles he must endure. First Beowulf is called upon to defeat Grendel, a monster that plagues the mead hall of King Hrothgar of Denmark. Beowulf then must defeat Grendel's mother, a hag who comes to the hall seeking revenge. Years later, when he is a powerful ruler, Beowulf fights a vicious dragon; he is victorious, but dies from wounds received in this final battle.

Benjamin Bagby created his performance of *Beowulf* in 1990 and delivers it only 10 to 20 times a year. Bagby's *Beowulf* has been presented in several historic and significant venues, including The Cloisters in New York, The British Library in London (as part of the four-day "Beowulf 1000" celebration that included a display of the surviving manuscript), the Edinburgh International Festival, and the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress. When presenting *Beowulf*, Bagby accompanies himself on a six-stringed Anglo-Saxon harp, built by Rainer Thureau of Wiesbaden, Germany, which was reconstructed from the remains of an oak instrument excavated from a seventh-century nobleman's grave south of Stuttgart, Germany.

## BENJAMIN BAGBY

Benjamin Bagby was born in Illinois and received undergraduate degrees in German literature and voice at Oberlin College. He then attended the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel, Switzerland where, in 1977, he earned a degree in music of the Middle Ages. At the same time he co-founded **Sequentia**, an ensemble that presents medieval music. Since the founding of Sequentia, Bagby has created over 70 programs of medieval music and drama and has performed throughout Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. More information about Sequentia can be found at [www.sequentia.org](http://www.sequentia.org).

Today Bagby resides in Paris, where he teaches medieval music and musicology at Université Paris—Sorbonne. He has been a guest lecturer, professor, or jury member at dozens of universities worldwide, including the University of Chicago, Vassar College, Indiana University School of Music, New York University, Wellesley College, and the New England Conservatory of Music. With Sequentia he teaches intensive two-week summer courses in medieval music and performance at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Along with Dr. Stefan Morent, guest speaker at **Artist's Talk**, Bagby is the co-director of the International Academy of Medieval Music at Ochsenhausen, Germany, at which Sequentia also performs.

In addition to presenting *Beowulf* in Anglo-Saxon language, Bagby gives solo performances of medieval oral epics in Old Icelandic and Old High German languages. He has recorded and authored liner notes for dozens of recordings of medieval music, and has won the *Diapason d'Or* (France) twice, the Edison Award (Netherlands) twice, the *Disque d'Or* (France), and has received a Grammy nomination. He has also created a DVD of his *Beowulf* performance. More information about Bagby's *Beowulf* can be found at [www.bagbybeowulf.com](http://www.bagbybeowulf.com).

## TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Beowulf: The Epic in Performance** with **Benjamin Bagby** on **Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, October 26, 27, 29, and 30** in Zellerbach Playhouse are priced at **\$40.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperformances.org](http://www.calperformances.org); and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior

citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at [www.calperformances.org](http://www.calperformances.org).

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced three hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available on Cal Performances' Facebook page and at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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Cal Performances' 2010/11 Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS**

**Tues. & Wed., Oct. 26 & 27 at 8:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**

**Fri. & Sat., Oct. 28 & 29 at 8:00 p.m.**

**Bancroft Way at Dana Court., Berkeley**

*Early Music*

*Beowulf: The Epic in Performance*

**Benjamin Bagby**, voice and Anglo-Saxon harp

**Program:** Vocalist Benjamin Bagby performances the epic poem *Beowulf* in its original Anglo-Saxon language with English supertitles, accompanying himself on a six-stringed Anglo-Saxon harp.

**Tickets:** \$40.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperformances.org](http://www.calperformances.org); and at the door.

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**Friday, October 29, 12:00 p.m.**  
**Artist's Talk**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Dana Court, Berkeley

Benjamin Bagby and Dr. Stefan Morent of Tuebingen University in Germany will discuss reconstruction and performance of medieval works in a conversation presented in association with the UC Berkeley Committee on Medieval Studies and Center for British Studies. This event is free and open to the public.

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