

Allison Monroe is the recipient of the 2017 Barbara Thornton Memorial Scholarship awarded by Early Music America.

This award is given by EMA to “an outstanding and highly-motivated (and possibly unconventional) young performer of medieval music who seeks to widen his/her experience through more advanced study and/or auditions in Europe.” The recipient is chosen by a jury of musicians who knew or worked with the great medieval music specialist and teacher, Barbara Thornton (1950-1998), who came to Europe from New York in 1970, filled with plans to study early music, and went on to co-found the medieval music ensemble *Sequentia* with Benjamin Bagby in 1977.

The selection of Allison Monroe was unanimous and enthusiastic. The jurors were impressed by Allison's clearly-stated project, her presentation, her singing and playing with passion, mastery and depth of feeling, and her dedication to her art. Excerpts of some remarks by the jurors:

“I have rarely encountered such a purposeful player, whose bow seems to be an extension of her musical thought, effortlessly flowing with great dignity from idea into sound”.

“Allison Monroe gets to the heart of what this award is about--both in the way she plans to dedicate herself to European studies in a focused manner, and in the way her presentation honors Barbara Thornton's spirit: she transmits being personally authentic, and that is the truest and perhaps only real type of authenticity we can strive for in these strange times. ”

“...a convincing vocal approach, taking into consideration a self-accompanied *Cantiga de Santa Maria* as a rhetorical challenge, and developing a convincing accompaniment approach through heterophonic playing on rebec. I was especially impressed by the honesty of her video performance, an un-doctored documentation without any tricks, made in one take.”

In 2017, Allison will complete a Doctor of Musical Arts in Historical Performance Practice at Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland, Ohio), after which she has plans to study and travel in Europe, specifically to gain experience in the performance of medieval music.

Previous to this, she had studied viola and violin, awarded a master's in music from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (Cardiff, UK), following a Bachelor of Arts in Music (Violin Performance) at the University of Maryland (College Park, MD).

She has performed with numerous ensembles, including the Newberry Consort, and

performed a wide variety of medieval repertoires during her years at CWRU. She attended the *Sequentia* medieval music summer course in Vancouver, where she joined the ensemble for performances of music from medieval France and Aquitaine. In 2016, she founded the ensemble *Trobár*, with Karin Weston, soprano; their ensemble is “dedicated to searching out medieval music and recreating it for modern audiences” (performances in the Boston Early Music Festival’s 2017 Fringe series).

For her upcoming travel and study in Europe, Allison writes that she would like to attend “the *Settimana Musicale del Trecento*, held in Arezzo, Italy, dedicating a week to intense study of the music of the Trecento as found in the *Squarcialupi Codex*. I would also spend a few weeks in Basel studying *vielle* with Baptiste Romain, the new professor of stringed instruments at the *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis*. These opportunities would expand my knowledge and experience in performing medieval music and would enable me to create connections with European medievalists.”

She continues: “Medieval music flourishes in Europe, with many ensembles and programs of study. While I would love to perform there periodically, ultimately I hope to help bring medieval music to the forefront of early music performance here in the USA. As an educator at heart, I look forward to passing on a love for and understanding of medieval music to young musicians. I am also passionate about bringing these lesser-known repertoires to new audiences, showing them the common thread of humanity that spans the centuries, cultures, genres, and styles. Studying in Europe would play a huge part in preparing me for this work, and this scholarship would make it possible for me to begin such study.”