

On the oral qualities of the poems:

Beam has read in Rome and Umbria, in Wales and England, in Toronto and up and down the East Coast of America. His highly regarded readings were chosen ten times as Best Bets, Our Picks, and Indy Picks by The Independent Weekly, twice as a Chapel Hill News Best Bet, once as a Chapel Hill Magazine Best Bet, and as a Smart Bet by Asheville's Mountain Xpress newspaper. In October 2012, on one of many visits to Franks Stasio's WUNC-FM NPR show The State of Things host Stasio said, "We consider our next guest the Poet Laureate of The State of Things". Beam has been an invited reader to a number of festivals and conferences, and since 1974 has given over 900 poetry readings, lectures, and panel discussions in art museums and galleries, schools, churches, bookstores, botanical gardens, restaurants, parks, and even living rooms and funerals.

I have listened often to your reading of your poems. They reverberate with secrets and splendors. I praise you as a true poet. Your work is subtle and elliptical, so you cannot expect love from brash forums. The world has a long reputation of ignoring genius. Persist in your very own madness, true to your angels.

—The late poet and filmmaker, **James Broughton** (letter to author)

You have a sweet, strong tenor — couldn't help thinking you *were* an Elizabethan singer, you *were* a troubadour, reincarnate. You have a fire in your voice, your poems, dancing around my kitchen, are alive on the page but even more alive in your singing them. You are now singing in your sweet tenor voice; it is the color of honey in the air, an added glow in the windows as I gaze down the yard at the silky-gray Hudson.

—Novelist **Michael Rumaker** (letter to author)

What a joy, your poems, a tongue one can speak and *read*.

—Novelist **Allan Gurganus** (letter to author)

Your voice is beautiful. Almost strained, and yet not. I find that like Rufus Wainwright, your singing finds expression at its extremity, and that feels almost dangerous, and certainly poignant. Truthful and lovely.

—Welsh painter, **Clive Hicks-Jenkins**, responding to Beam's YouTube readings *Beyond the Green Door*, 2015

You have transported me to a flowery glade, located in the deep wood, where King Clive has stopped to rest with his attendants. The good troubadour, Jeffery, stands up to sing his beautiful song and Jordan, the King's Champion, dances. The spectators are privileged to see two men honour their liege Lord.

—**Sarah Parvin**, British blogger **The Curious One**, responding to Beam's YouTube readings *Beyond the Green Door*, 2015

Many people think of poetry readings as tense formal affairs where heavy-starch types go stiffen up. These people will be forced to change their minds ... if they attend Jeffery Beam's reading for McIntyre's Fine Books and Bookends' "Village Verses" series. Regarding poetry recital as a sacred act, Beam delivers his works with passionate theatricality ... even singing some of his poems.

—**The Independent Weekly**, "**Best Bets**" (July 22, 1992)

A Beam reading is an experience and his publication party [for **Dame Kind**] is a joy to host.

—**McIntyre's Fine Books and Bookends**, Fearington Village, North Carolina, nationally known host to numerous literary readings (1992)

When you hear a Jeffery Beam performance of his work, expect the hair on your neck to stand up. [He] comes out of that Southern country-evangelical background that has been producing a crop of writers [such as] Dorothy Allison, Cormac McCarthy, Jim Grimsley, Max Childers and Lee Smith.

—**Jonathan Williams**, **The Jargon Society**, publisher of **Dame Kind** (ad for book)

Beam, a musician, actor, and performer, is the very best poet at reading his own works. Some of our greatest poets are absolutely dreary when reading their own work. But Beam is a performer, and his interpretations of these animals through his own words are delightfully fascinating. From the simple and beautiful antelope, to such strange creatures

as the cockatrice, the gorgon, the hydra, or the lamia, Beam uses the words with an actor's skill, relishing them, rolling them on the tongue before sending them flying over our heads: the serpent-like cockatrice; the innate intelligence of the hippopotamus ... or the ferocious crocodile.

—Alan Hall's review of **An Elizabethan Bestiary: Retold**, **Chapel Hill News** (April 1999)

When he presents his poems he performs them, the presentation and the words one whole motion.

—**Shelby Stephenson**, NC Poet Laureate and editor of **Pembroke Magazine**, letter of reference to granting body

What a spirit he is: his poetry bedazzles. I find his combination of the profound and the whimsical the very essence of music itself. No wonder he bursts into song as he recites! I know that when I read his poems about the natural world, I feel utterly engaged with that world and the smallest most forgotten flower becomes a star on earth.

—Novelist **Marianne Gingher** (letter of nomination for arts award)

June 1999 reading at Malaprop's Books in Asheville chosen as the weekend's "Smart Bet"

—**Mountain Xpress: Weekly Independent News, Arts and Events for Western North Carolina**

North Carolina poet Jeffery Beam is a work of art in and of himself. His performance-art-style presentations of his poetry have been delighting lovers of verse in Chapel Hill and other parts of the southeastern region for years.

Beam's child-like ability to illuminate the magic in all of the simple elements of our physical environment takes his readers on a soothingly rhythmic journey back to the very root of who and what we are. [In performing **An Elizabethan Bestiary: Retold**] his vocal gymnastics lend each creature a personality distinct and unique.

—**East Cooper Monthly**, Sullivan's Island, Charleston, Delacey Skinner (September 1999)

Despite readings and slams, poetry these days is too often confined to the page. (Beam) proposes to give it breath and color.

—**Janet Lembke**, natural history writer and classicist (letter of reference for grant proposal, 2000)

I've never seen as superior a performance artist, as Jeffery takes his verses into song and chant.

—**Ronald Bayes**, poet, founder of **St. Andrew's Press and Review** (letter of reference for grant proposal, 2000)

Beam's eighth annual Winter Stories for Children at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill was featured in: "Bounce Off the Wall, But Don't Bore Them: Storytellers Promise 'Crazy Fun' for Children in Annual Winter Stories Program"

—**Chapel Hill News**, Dave Hart (December 8, 2000)

Those who have heard Beam read know that his spare, emotionally charged poems come to life in performance with an openhearted and honest warmth that challenges this era's love affair with irony and power. This reading, drawing from the whole range of his work, should be particularly special.

—David Need in **The Independent Weekly**, *Best Bets* (Week of July 24-30, 2002, 19: no. 31)

Incidentally, there's a heart-rending version of Joni Mitchell's "Fiddle and the Drum" in [Jeffery Beam's reading](#) at the Carrboro Poetry Festival. I actually remember just this intense sense of chills in my spine and a tear or two when listening to him sing it. —**Lucipo Digest**, Vol 7, Issue 30, Nov. 2004

A generous and thoughtful reading and as usual I was caught by combination of intense pressure/limits placed on expression and the recovery of what matters anyway. Several times I felt as if choices were determined by the shapes of leaves—sycamore or maple (and thus incised or whatever the botanical term would be), or left force of leaf shapes in dense dark winery color that is your banked heat.

—Poet and critic **David Need** — response to a reading from **The Beautiful Tendons** at Chapel Hill's Internationalist Books.

As for the reading – it is always such a delight – it is all the best aspects of church and worship without the deadly rulers upon the knuckles routine.

—Poet **Ricky Garni** — response to a reading from **The Beautiful Tendons** at Chapel Hill's Internationalist Books

Jeffery Beam sings of the natural world as tuneful as the tree clinging to my picture window. Amazing singing, out of this world, yet right there for me to here through the glass.

—Poet **Shelby Stephenson**, Facebook posting September 2011

Maybe 50 of us attended the Jeffrey Beam poetry session this afternoon, being transported to another universe. He was beyond fantastic. His choice of poems and his delivery of them held us spellbound. I nominate him for NCBG Poet-in-Residence.

—Lynn Knauff, audience member at "Bee, I'm Expecting You" reading at the North Carolina Botanical Garden on July 19, 2015

When school lets out, I slow down because I suddenly have a kid at my elbow. We learned about wildflowers yesterday and petted bumblebees rummaging the blooms of purple coneflowers. Poet Jeffrey Beam reminds us that loving bees is important—they're responsible for pollinating every third bite of food we eat. Focusing on bees and pollination, Beam reads from his work "Bee, I'm Expecting You" [sic] ["Life of the Bee"] as well as poems from ancient Egypt, Sylvia Plath, Virgil, Pablo Neruda and others at the North Carolina Botanical Garden. He'll also share bee folklore and some of his art-song cycle collaboration with Lee Hoiby. —Critic **Chris Vitiello**, "Bee, I'm Expecting You" bee poem anthology reading at the North Carolina Botanical Garden chosen as **Indy Week "Our Pick"** June 2013. [Also listed as a *Raleigh News & Observer* "Pick for the Week"]