

Hildegard Transfigured: Medieval Trance for the 21st Century

Start time: 8.30pm

Approximate end time: 9.30pm, with no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Programme

Hildegard von Bingen 'Antiphona: O successores', *Psalm antiphon for Confessors*

'Responsorium: Favus distillans', *Responsory for St Ursula and Companions, likely for Matins*

Marcus Davidson *Musical Harmony*

Laura Moody 'Humility and Universe as Body' from *Hildegard Portraits*

Tim Lea Young *Three Wings*, Part 1

Hildegard von Bingen 'Antiphona: O virtus sapientie', *Votive antiphon for Divine Wisdom*

Stevie Wishart *Azeruz*

Laura Moody 'Sermon and Sing' from *Hildegard Portraits*

Hildegard von Bingen 'Antiphona: O mirum admirandum', *Psalm antiphon for St Disibod*

Stevie Wishart 'O Chorusans Lux Stellarum', *On a cantus firmus by St Hildegard of Bingen*

Hildegard von Bingen 'Antiphona: O orzchis Ecclesia', *Antiphon for Dedication of a Church*

Marcus Davidson *O Boundless Ecclesia*

Laura Moody 'O Woman' and 'Love' from *Hildegard Portraits*

Emily Levy *How Sweetly You Burn*

Hildegard von Bingen 'Antiphona: Unde quocumque venientes', *Antiphon for St Ursula*

Laura Moody 'The Living Light' from *Hildegard Portraits*

Voice Trio, visual artist Innerstrings and composer Laura Moody come together in a collaborative piece of concert-theatre.

For much of her life, St Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) experienced highly intense visions which she called 'the living light' (*lux vivens*). What she saw, felt and came to understand through these visions is recorded in her music and the stunning illuminations for *Scivias* ('Know the Way', 1141–51). Some scholars believe that her visions were brought about by migraines and it is this aspect of her life – 'the living light' – that is explored tonight.

'When I was 42 years and seven months old, Heaven was opened and a fiery light of exceeding brilliance came and permeated my whole brain, and inflamed my whole heart and my whole breast.'
Hildegard wrote in *Scivias*

Hildegard joined the monastery in Disibodenberg (in Germany's Rhineland-Palatinate) when she was just eight and would stay there for nearly 40 years, eventually becoming abbess in 1136. She founded her own abbey at Rupertsberg near Bingen in 1147 and a second monastery in nearby Eibingen in 1165. Throughout her life, Hildegard was a great spiritual leader, theologian, mystic, scientist and composer. Revered as a saint for centuries, Pope Benedict XVI canonised Hildegard on 10 May 2012.

Laura Moody's research for the show brought her to *The Personal Correspondence of Hildegard of Bingen*, translated by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman. She has set extracts and fragments of Hildegard's letters in her composition *Hildegard Portraits* (2021), written especially for this programme. As Laura Moody writes:

'It is some kind of miracle to have the kind of access to a female creator of the 12th century that we have with Hildegard, her output only having been permissible during her lifetime because of her sacred status. From my perspective this project is also a collaboration with Hildegard herself – not only with her luminous, visionary musical language and multifaceted perspective on life and spirituality, but with her 81 years as a living human being.'

You will hear Moody's music interspersed throughout the programme in the form of miniatures, culminating in the finale, *The Living Light*.

'The libretto for this collects words that Hildegard used to describe the presence she encountered in her visions. The neurologist Oliver Sacks famously hypothesised that Hildegard's visions were a symptom of migraine with aura and (as a fellow migraineur) I have tried to capture some of that relentlessness and pressure in this virtuosic and rhythmic depiction of her experiences of transcendence.'

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The members of Voice were introduced to Hildegard's music in their teens, performing and recording with Stevie Wishart's group Sinfonye. The trio are still close to Wishart today and perform from her transcriptions of Hildegard's manuscripts. *Hildegard Transfigured* includes two contemporary compositions by Wishart: *O Chorusans Lux Stellarum* which was written for Voice and is based on a cantus firmus by Hildegard; and *Azeruz* which sets words from her 'lingua ignota' or made-up language.

The other contemporary works in tonight's programme were all written for Voice and are inspired by Hildegard. Marcus Davidson, friend and long-time composer for the trio, wrote *O Boundless Ecclesia* as a response to Hildegard's *O orzchis ecclesia*. Emily Levy's composition, *How Sweetly You Burn* sets text taken from Hildegard's morality play, *Ordo Virtutum* ('Play of Virtues') – speech and chorus - which is believed by some scholars to have been written as a memorial to Richardis von Stade, close friend and member of Hildegard's order, following her untimely death. Tim Lea Young composed *Three Wings: Part 7* having won a competition run by Brighton Early Music Festival to write for Voice in the early stages of the *Hildegard Transfigured* project. The 'three wings' referenced in his piece is inspired by text from Hildegard's *O virtus sapientie*.

All of Hildegard's works performed this evening come from her body of work *Symphonie armonie celestium revelationum* ('The Symphony of the Harmony of the Celestial Revelations', 1140s–1150s). The trio has chosen them for the beauty of the texts and the uplifting, atmospheric nature of the music.

'What draws us to her music time and again are the soaring, melismatic lines, the flourishes and ornamentation and especially for the ensemble sound we can create.' Hildegard's music has helped to forge Voice's unique ensemble sound, formed the backbone of many programmes, and provided inspiration for many of the works they have commissioned.

Performers

Voice Trio:
Victoria Couper
Clemmie Franks
Emily Burn

Hildegard von Bingen
'Antiphona: O successores'

O successores fortissimi leonis,
inter templum et altare,

dominantes in ministracione eius,
sicut angeli sonant in laudibus
et sicut assunt populis,
in adiutorio vos estis inter illos
qui hec faciunt,
semper curam habentes in officio agni.

O followers of the mightiest lion,
between the sanctuary and the altar,

masters in his household,
just as the angels sound praises
and are here to help the people,
you also are among those
who accomplish this,
always ministering in the service of the Lamb.

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
Translation © Richard Vendome

Hildegard von Bingen
'Responsorium: Favus distillans'

Favus distillans Ursula virgo fuit,
que Agnum Dei amplecti desideravit.

Mel et lac sub lingua eius,
quia pomiferum hortum
et flores florum
in turba virginum
ad se collegit.

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui Sancto.

Mel ...

A dripping honeycomb was Ursula the virgin,
who desired to embrace the Lamb of God.

Milk and honey under her tongue,
an orchard of fruit trees
and blossoming flowers
among the crowd of virgins
gathered all around her.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

Milk ...

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
Translation © Stevie Wishart

Marcus Davidson
Musical Harmony

Musical harmony softens hard hearts. It induces in them the moisture of reconciliation, and it invokes the Holy Spirit. When different voices sing in unity, they symbolise the simple tenderness of mutual love. When different voices blend in song, they symbolise the blending of thoughts and feelings which is the highest pleasure human beings can know. Let the sweet sound of music enter your breast, and let it speak to your heart. It will drive out all darkness, and spread spiritual light to every part of you.

Laura Moody
'Humility'

How could God work through me? If I were not aware I am but a poor little creature, I tremble in fear. Totally ignorant. I count myself as nothing. But I stretch my hands to God so He might raise me up like a feather Which, having no weight of its own, flies on the wind.

Poor little woman though I am. A Poor little form of a woman.

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman © OUP 2006

Hildegard von Bingen
'Antiphona: O virtus sapientie'

O virtus sapientie
que circuiens circuisti
comprehedendo omnia
in una via, que habet vitam
tres alas habens
quarum una in altrum volate
et alterra de terra sudat
et tertia undique volat
Laus tibi sit sicut te decet
O sapientia

Laura Moody
'Universe as Body'

I shored up the four corners of the world with fire, cloud and water.
I joined together all the boundaries of the world like veins.

Rocks from fire
Water like bones
Earth from moisture
Viridity like marrow

The sun, the light of his eyes
The wind, the hearing of his ears
The air, his fragrance
The dew, his taste
Exuding viridity like
His mouth.

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

Tim Lea Young
Three Wings, Part 1

In una via, quae habet vitam,
tres alas (habens),

I, the fiery life of the divine substance, blaze in the beauty of the fields,
shine in the waters and burn in the sun, moon and stars.
I bring all things to life.

Quarum una in altum volat,
et altera de terra sudat,
et tertia undique volat.

In one life-giving path,
three wings you have.

O strength of wisdom
that circulating, encircles,
surrounding all that has life
in one path;
having three wings,
one flies in the heights
and another sweeps the earth
and the third flies in every place.
Praise to you, as befits you,
O Wisdom.

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart and Voice
Translation © Stevie Wishart

Stevie Wishart
Azeruz

Lingua ignota

Anziz
Marizma
Zizria
Sparinichibus
Aseruz
Magizima
Zizanz
Gusca
Dizia
Mazma
Pazia
Cririschia
Mikoziz
Laufrica
Fulzia
Florisca
Gimeldia

Cowbane
Common centaury
Cinnamon
Almond
Hemp
Black hellebore
Briar
Lesser celandine
Burning bush
Vetch
Henbane
Laurel
Garden radish
Coltsfoot
Marigold
Seed of the balsam
Pine

Text from Lingua ignota by St Hildegard of Bingen
Translation after Pitra 1882

Laura Moody
'Sermon'

I see a black fire in you
Kindled against us.

Sometimes you are like a bear
Which growls under its breath,
But sometimes like an ass
Not prudent in your duties
But worn down.

I see you like a little boy
Or some madman
Living before Living Eyes

The luminaries are missing from the firmament
of God's justice in your utterances, as when the stars
do not shine, for you are like the night exhaling darkness,
and you are like people who do not work, or even walk
in the light because of your indolence. But just as a snake
hides in a cave after it has shed its skin, you walk in filth like
disgusting beasts.

You are quick in your pursuit of adolescent lust, incapable,
like children, of even speaking your own salvation.
You do whatever your flesh demands. For the power of God
will crush and destroy your necks which have become stiff
with iniquity, for they have been puffed up as with the breath
of the wind, since you neither know God nor fear men.
You do not see God nor even wish to do so.

Oh, what great and evil enmity this is! That a person is
unwilling to live an upright life, either for God's sake or
mankind's, but, rather, seeks honour without work and
eternal rewards without abstinence. Such a one, in his
supposed sanctity, vainly longs to cry out, as the devil does,
I am good and holy. But this is not true.

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

Laura Moody
'Sing'

Sing the mysteries of God
Like a trumpet
Which only returns a sound
But does not function unassisted
For it is Another who breathes into it...
From time to time
I resound a little, like
The dim sound of a trumpet
From the Living Light

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

Hildegard von Bingen
'Antiphona: O mirum admirandum'

O mirum admirandum,
quod absconsa forma praecellit,
ardua in honesta statura
ubi vivens altitudo
profert mystica
unde o Disibode
surges in fine
succurrente flore
omnium ramorum mundi
ut primum surrexisti

O marvellous miracle
that a hidden figure stood out
steep on the noble stature
where the living height
utters mysteries
hence o Disibod
you will arise in the end
with the aid of a flower
of all the branches of the world
as you first arose

*Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
and Voice*

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Stevie Wishart
O Chorusans Lux Stellarum

O chorusans lux stellarum
O splendidissima specialis forma regalium nuptiarum
O fulgens gemma
Tu es ornata in alta persona
quae non habet maculatam rugam
tu es etiam socia Angelorum
et civis sanctorum
fuge, fuge speluncam antiqui perditoris!
et veniens, veni in palacium Regis.

O glistening starlight,
O splendid special one
of the royal marriage,
O glowing gem:
You are arrayed as a person of high rank
who has no mark nor wrinkle;
You are also an angel's companion
and a citizen of sacredness.
Run, flee from the ancient destroyer's cave!
Come, enter into the palace of the King.

Latin text St Hildegard of Bingen
Translation © Stevie Wishart

St Hildegard of Bingen
'O orzchis ecclesia'

O orzchis (immensa)* Ecclesia
armis divinis praecincta
et hyazintho ornate
tu es caldemia (aroma)
stigmatum loifolum (populorum)

et urbs scientiarum
O, o, tu es etiam crizanta (uncta)
in alto sono
et es chorzta (corusca) gemma

O orzchis (immense)* Church,
encircled by divine weapons,
and adorned with hyacinths,
you are the caldemia (fragrance)
of the stigmata of the loifolum (peoples),

and a city of knowledge.
O, O, you are crizanta (anointed)
with soaring sound,
and you are a chorzta (twinkling) jewel.

*Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
and Voice*

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Marcus Davidson
O Boundless Ecclesia

O boundless Ecclesia
your gems the colour of heaven:
you are the fragrance of the wounds of nations,
the city of knowledge.
O lady, O jewel ever sparkling:
such music sounds at your crowning!

*Translated text edited Voice after St Hildegard of
Bingen's O orzchis ecclesia*

O marvellous miracle
that a hidden figure stood out
steep on the noble stature
where the living height
utters mysteries
hence o Disibod
you will arise in the end
with the aid of a flower
of all the branches of the world
as you first arose

*Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
and Voice
Translation © Stevie Wishart*

Laura Moody
'O Woman'

O, woman
What a splendid being you are!
For you have set your foundation in the sun,
And have conquered the world.

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

Laura Moody
'Love'

Daughter listen to me,
Your mother
Speaking to you in the spirit.
I so loved ...
The nobility of your character
Your wisdom
Your chastity
Your spirit
Every aspect of your life

Let all who have grief like mine mourn with me
All who have had such great love in their hearts and
minds ...

She was like a flower in her beauty and loveliness
In the symphony of this world.

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

Hildegard von Bingen
'Antiphona: Unde quocumque venientes'

Unde quocumque venientes,
perexerunt velut cum gaudio
celestis paradisi suscepte sunt
quia in religione morum
honorifice apparuerunt

Emily Levy
How Sweetly You Burn

Oh friend you stand in the royal bridal chamber,
Oh how tenderly you burn in the King's embraces.
When the sun shines through you
So that your noble flower shall never wilt.

Oh noble friend, no shade will ever find your flower
drooping.
The flower of the field falls before the wind.
The rain scatters its petals.

Oh friend, you abide forever
In the chorus of the company of heaven.
Hence, you are a tender flower that shall never fade.

*Text after St Hildegard of Bingen's Ordo Virtutum
Translation after Barbara Newman, edited by Emily Levy*

From wherever they came
they were welcomed
with the joy of celestial paradise
because in their spiritual life
they appeared full of honour.

*Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arr by Stevie Wishart
and Voice
Translation © Stevie Wishart*

Laura Moody
'The Living Light'

The words
The words I speak
The words I speak are not my own
Nor any human being's

I looked
I looked to wisdom
I looked to wisdom and I saw
I looked to wisdom and I heard
I looked to wisdom and I saw and heard
These words

These words
From that light
From that light which I see
From that light which I see in my soul
From that light which I see in my soul, I saw
These words

Poor little form of a woman
A fragile vessel
Not from myself
But from the...

Serene Light
The living fountain
The living fountain says
The Serene Light
In a vision of my waking soul
In a vision
A clear revelation
In a true vision
Says

The Living Light says
The Bright Fountain, truthful and just says
A clear revelation in a true vision says
I say
I say these things
I say these things to you
I say these things to you in the light
In the light of
In the light of true visions
The light
The light

The living light ...

The light
Far brighter than the lucent cloud through which the sun
shines
Not like
Not like the words
Not like the words of human speech
But like a blazing flame
A cloud that moves through clear air

I can by no means grasp
This form of light
Any more than I can stare fully into the sun.
When I do see it
All my sorrow and pain vanish from my memory
And I become
More like a young girl
Than an old woman.

The words
The light
The living fountain
The living light
The bright fountain
I saw
I heard
From that light
Which I see in my soul

Translation by Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman

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