

Hildegard Transfigured: a medieval trance for the 21st century

Hildegard Transfigured is a collaborative piece of concert-theatre by vocal trio Voice, visual artist Innerstrings, and composer Laura Moody that celebrates St. Hildegard of Bingen through song, psychedelic lights, and live visuals. The performance at SJE includes the world premiere of Moody's *Hildegard Portraits*.

St Hildegard of Bingen (1098 - 1179) joined the monastery in Disibodenberg (in German Rhineland) when she was just eight years old and would stay there for nearly forty 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 of Bingen on 10 May 2012. Hildegard experienced intense visions, recorded in her major work *Scivias (Know the Way)*, (1141-51), and it is this aspect of her life that the collaboration with visual artist, Innerstrings, will bring to life in *Hildegard Transfigured*, transfiguring her beautiful music into a new sensory experience.

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 (OUP 2006). She has set extracts and fragments of Hildegard's letters in her composition *Hildegard Portraits*, written especially for this programme. You will hear Moody's music interspersed throughout in the form of miniatures, culminating in the finale *The Living Light*.

"It is some kind of miracle to have the kind of access to a female creator of the twelfth 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 eighty-one years as a living human being." (Laura Moody, 2021)

Voice were introduced to the music of St Hildegard of Bingen 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's music has helped to forge Voice's ensemble sound, formed the backbone of many programmes, and provided inspiration for many of the works they have commissioned. *Hildegard Transfigured* weaves Hildegard's medieval music with contemporary works inspired by the abbess, including the 2021 composition by Marcus Davidson, friend and long-time composer for the trio, *O Boundless Ecclesia*.

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. *"There are some in tonight's programme that we have been singing together for many years - our old friends - and others that are relatively new to us. 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."*

A huge thank you to all our donors whose kind contributions have supported this collaboration. This collaboration is also supported by Help Musicians Fusion Fund.

Running Order

O successores Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)
Psalm antiphon for Confessors, *Scivias* III.13.6a

Favus distillans Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)
Responsory for St. Ursula and Companions, likely for Matins

Musical Harmony Marcus Davidson for Voice (2012)
Text Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias* 3.13.15

Humility and Universe as Body
Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)
Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman

Three Wings Tim Young for Voice (2019)
Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Sabina Flanagan

O virtus sapientiae Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)
Votive antiphon for Divine Wisdom

Azeruz Stevie Wishart (2001)
Text Hildegard's 'Lingua Ignota', her made-up language

Sermon and Sing
Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)
Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman

O mirum admirandum Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)
Psalm antiphon for St. Disibod

O Chorusans Lux Stellarum Stevie Wishart for Voice (2012)
On a cantus firmus by Hildegard of Bingen

O orzchis Ecclesia Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)
Antiphon for Dedication of a Church

O Boundless Ecclesia Marcus Davidson for Voice (2021)
Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Stevie Wishart

O Woman

Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman

Caritas habundat Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Psalm antiphon for the Holy Spirit as Divine Love

Love

Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman

How Sweetly You Burn Emily Levy for Voice (2014)

Text after Hildegard of Bingen from her *Ordo Virtutum (Play of Virtues)* - speech and chorus.

Believed by some scholars to be written as a memorial to Richardis, close friend and member of Hildegard's order, following her untimely death.

Unde quocumque Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Antiphon for St. Ursula

The Living Light

Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

Text Hildegard of Bingen, translation Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman

Synopses of sung texts

O successores

O followers of the mightiest lion...masters in his household [and] just as the angels sound praises...so you also minister in the service of the Lamb.

Favus distillans

Ursula the virgin was a dripping honeycomb, who longed to be with the Lamb of God. Honey and milk under her tongue, an orchard of fruit trees, and blossoming flowers gathered all around her.

Musical Harmony

Musical harmony softens hard hearts...and invokes the Holy Spirit. When different voices sing in unity, they symbolise the simple tenderness of mutual love...[and] the blending of thoughts and feelings which is the highest pleasure human beings can know. It will drive out all darkness and invokes the Holy Spirit.

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.

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.

Three Wings

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

O virtus sapientiae

O energy of wisdom, you of the whirling wings
One wing soars high in heaven
One wing sweeps the earth
And the third flies all around us.

Azeruz

Cowbane...cinnamon...almond...hemp...black hellebore...burning bush...vetch
*These are just some of the words from Hildegard's Lingua Ignota, describing the plants and
herbs she used in her remedies.*

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.

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

O mirum admirandum

O how wondrous! A hidden form...so high, so steep, surpasses in its lofty honor where Living Height itself reveals the mysteries.
And so, O Disibod, you shall arise at the end of time...the flower of all the branches of the world comes to your aid.

O Chorusans Lux Stellarum

...O most brilliant singular figure of the royal marriage,
You are arrayed as a person of high rank who has no mark nor wrinkle;
Run, flee from the ancient destroyer's cave!...enter into the palace of the King.

O orzchis Ecclesia

O boundless Ecclesia...adorned with jacinth, you are the fragrance of the wounds of nations and the city of knowledge.
...you are anointed...and you are a sparkling gem.

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 everlasting, ever sparkling. Such music sounds at your crowning...Your gems the colour of heaven.

O Woman

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

Caritas habundat

Charity rising from the vast abyss
past the stars above
abounds in all worlds
unbounded love
and with the spousal kiss disarms the sky-king.

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.

How Sweetly You Burn

Oh friend you stand in the royal bridal chamber...
how tenderly you burn in the King's embraces.

Oh noble friend no shade will ever find your flower drooping.

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

Unde quocumque

And thus, wherever they went they were welcomed,
for the joy of the celestial paradise, which they received,
was the honor of their religious life, made manifest

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

The Artists

Voice

Victoria, Clemmie, and Emily started singing together as part of the Oxford Girls' Choir and have sung together since their early teens. They formed the trio Voice in 2006 to combine their love of early music with commissioning new works, especially by female composers, and making their own arrangements, honing a truly unique sound and a blend that has been described as “*one voice*”, and even seen as worthy competitors “*for the slot left by the dissolution of Anonymous 4*” (Gramophone).

The trio has toured throughout the USA, UK, and Europe with their two self-released albums: *Musical Harmony* (2013) ‘...a stunning body of work destined to prick up the hairs on the back of one’s neck’ (Oxford Times & Mail) and *Patterns of Love* (2015). Collaborative releases include: *I Have Set My Hert So Hy* (Avie 2015) with Dufay Collective, whom they also toured two new programmes of Spanish medieval pilgrim music (Galicia Sept 2019); and Leoš Janáček’s *The diary of one who disappeared; Moravian folksongs; Říkadla* (Nursery Rhymes) with Julius Drake / Nicky Spence (Hyperion 2019). “*The arrival of the*

siren-like trio... (the diaphanous Voice) is heart-stopping and haunting in equal measure”
(Gramophone - recording of the month).

www.voicetrio.co.uk

Innerstrings

Visual artist, Innerstrings, specialises in liquid art and live feed visuals; often using a mixture of found footage, bowls of liquid, video mixers and cameras pointing at the performing artists. Based in Lewes, Innerstrings has toured extensively with Uncle Acid and the Deadbeats, as well as Josefin Öhrn and the Liberation, Lost Horizons and The Bluetones, and can often be found providing visuals at festivals where psychedelic visual content is obligatory.

<https://linktr.ee/Innerstrings>

Laura Moody

Laura Moody is a composer, cellist, vocalist, songwriter and theatre performer from the UK. Her work focuses on storytelling, ritual, the expressive potential of musicians' physicality and the transformation of spaces through sound, music and movement. She considers all of her work to be theatre of some kind. In her solo work she explores what is possible using only acoustic cello and voice to create songs which draw on hugely diverse influences. She likes to think of these as pop songs but nobody else ever seems to agree with this definition. In November 2014 she released her debut solo album *Acrobats* to major critical acclaim. Touching fingers with cabaret and performance art, she has since performed this music everywhere from the International Handel Festival to Europe's largest fetish club.

Most recently Laura composed, and performed in, five consecutive shows for The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse at Shakespeare's Globe, each of these exploring a different way of reinterpreting the same very idiosyncratic, candlelit space and the function of music and musicians within it. Other recent works include the seance-like *Medium* for vocalising, 'mind-reading' string quartet and award-nominated scores for the experimental *dreamplay* at The Vaults Theatre and the radio drama *Mary Rose* for BBC Radio 3. In 2017 *Parallelist*, a collaborative music theatre work with the sound artist Clay Gold, premiered at Aldeburgh Festival. Dealing with telecommunications, isolation and theories of consciousness, *Parallelist* exists somewhere between music theatre, one-woman opera and installation art and will be touring in the near future.

For fifteen years Laura's major focus as a collaborative musician was as a member of the innovative string quartet Elysian Quartet, known for its pioneering performances and recordings of contemporary classical, experimental and improvised music. She is a frequent collaborator of Radiohead's Philip Selway, performing and arranging for his film scores, albums and solo shows. Other artists she has worked with include: Meredith Monk, Björk, Simon Fisher Turner, JARV IS, Anna Calvi, Antony and the Johnsons, Peter Gabriel and Kate Tempest.

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