

## Hildegard Transfigured: a medieval trance for the 21st century

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 (Sacks, 1970; Singer, 1951) and it is this aspect of her life - 'the living light' - that is explored in tonight's show.

*Hildegard Transfigured* is a collaborative piece of concert-theatre by Voice, visual artist Innerstrings, and composer Laura Moody.

*"When I was 42 years and 7 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 *Scivias* (Giering, 2018)

Hildegard joined the monastery in Disibodenberg (in Germany's Rhineland-Palatinate) when she was just eight years old 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 (Maddox, 2013).

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* (May 2021), written especially for this programme.

*"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)

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."* (Laura Moody)

Voice was 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, close friend and member of Hildegard's order, following her untimely death. Tim Lea Young composed *Three Wings: pt 1* having won a competition run by BREMF (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.

Supported by



**Hildegard Transfigured is supported by Help Musicians.**

#### References

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Jenny Giering (2018) *Hildegard's Visions, and Mine*. The New York Times.

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Oliver Sacks (1970) *Migraine*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

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## Running Order

**Antiphona: O successores** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Psalm antiphon for Confessors

**Responsorium: Favus distillans** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Responsory for St. Ursula and Companions, likely for Matins

**Musical Harmony** Marcus Davidson for Voice (2012)

**Humility and Universe as Body**  
*Hildegard Portraits*, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

**Three Wings: pt 1** Tim Lea Young for Voice (2019)

**Antiphona: O virtus sapientie** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Votive antiphon for Divine Wisdom

**Azeruz** Stevie Wishart (2001)

**Sermon and Sing**  
*Hildegard Portraits*, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

**Antiphona: O mirum admirandum** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Psalm antiphon for St. Disibod

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

**Antiphona: O orzchis Ecclesia** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Antiphon for Dedication of a Church

**O Boundless Ecclesia** Marcus Davidson for Voice (2021)

**O Woman**  
*Hildegard Portraits*, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

**Love**  
*Hildegard Portraits*, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

**How Sweetly You Burn** Emily Levy for Voice (2014)

**Antiphona: Unde quocumque venientes** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)  
Antiphon for St. Ursula

**The Living Light**  
*Hildegard Portraits*, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

## Sung Texts

### **Antiphona: O successores** St Hildegard of Bingen (12<sup>th</sup>C)

Psalm antiphon for Confessors

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart

Translation © Richard Vendome

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.
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### **Responsorium: Favus distillans** St Hildegard of Bingen

Responsory for St. Ursula and Companions

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Favus distillans Ursula virgo fuit, que Agnum Dei amplecti desideravit.  <i>Mel et lac sub lingua eius, quia pomiferum hortum et flores florum in turba virginum ad se collegit.</i>  Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.  <i>Mel..</i>	A dripping honeycomb was Ursula the virgin, who desired to embrace the Lamb of God.  <i>Milk and honey under her tongue, an orchard of fruit trees and blossoming flowers among the crowd of virgins gathered all around her.</i>  Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  <i>Milk..</i>
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### **Musical Harmony** Marcus Davidson (2012)

Text from Scivias, St Hildegard of Bingen

Translation sourced from Canberra Academy of Music and Related Arts

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.

**Humility** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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: pt 1** Tim Lea Young (2019)

Translation after Sabina Flanagan, edited by Tim Lea Young

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.

**Antiphona: O virtus sapientie** St Hildegard of Bingen (12th C)

Antiphon for Divine Wisdom  
 Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart and Voice  
 Translation © Stevie Wishart

<p>O virtus sapientie      que circuiens cicuisti      comprehendendo 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</p>	<p>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.</p>
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**Azeruz** Stevie Wishart (2001)

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

<i>Lingua ignota</i>	<i>English</i>
Anziz	Cowbane
Marizma	Common centaury
Zizria	Cinnamon
Sparinichibus	Almond
Aseruz	Hemp
Magizima	Black hellebore
Zizanz	Briar
Gusca	Lesser celandine
Dizia	Burning bush
Mazma	Vetch
Pazia	Henbane
Cririschia	Laurel
Mikoziz	Garden radish
Laufrica	Coltsfoot
Fulzia	Marigold
Florisca	Seed of the balsam

**Sermon** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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

**Antiphona: O mirum admirandum** St Hildegard of Bingen (12th C)

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart and Voice

<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>
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**O Chorusans Lux Stellarum** Stevie Wishart (2012)

Latin text St Hildegard of Bingen

Translated text © Stevie Wishart

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.

**O orzchis ecclesia** St Hildegard of Bingen (12th C)

Votive Antiphon for the Dedication of a Church

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart and Voice

<p>O orzchis (immensa)* Ecclesia armis divinis praecincta et hyazintho ornate tu es caldemia (aroma) stigmatum loifolium (populorum) et urbs scientiarum O, o, tu es etiam crizanta (uncta) in alto sono et es chorzta (corusca) gemma</p> <p>*Latin translation of <i>lingua ignota</i></p>	<p>O orzchis (immense)* Church, encircled by divine weapons, and adorned with hyacinths, you are the caldemia (fragrance) of the stigmata of the loifolium (peoples), and a city of knowledge. O, o, you are crizanta (anointed) with soaring sound, and you are a chorzta (twinkling) jewel.</p> <p>*English translation of <i>lingua ignota</i></p>
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**O Boundless Ecclesia** Marcus Davidson (2021)

Translated text ed. Voice after St Hildegard of Bingen's *O orzchis 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!

**O Woman** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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

**Love** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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**

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

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.

### **Antiphona: Unde quocumque venientes** St Hildegard of Bingen

Antiphon for St. Ursula

Translation © Stevie Wishart

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart and Voice

Unde quocumque venientes, perexerunt velut cum gaudio celestis paradisi suscepte sunt quia in religione morum honorifice apparuerunt	From wherever they came they were welcomed with the joy of celestial paradise because in their spiritual life they appeared full of honour.
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**The Living Light** Laura Moody (2021)

*Hildegard Portraits*

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

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

Libretto for *Hildegard Portraits* adapted by Laura Moody from *The Personal Correspondence of Hildegard of Bingen*, translated by Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, Copyright OUP 2006.

## Artists

### Voice

“Brilliant trio...sensational singers” The Choir, BBC Radio 3 – Sara Mohr-Pietsch

Voice is an exciting, female vocal trio. In their 18 years together, they have built a dedicated fan-base across the world; a rich, varied repertoire of their own arrangements, new commissions, and rarely performed Early Music; and they have honed a truly unique sound. Victoria, Clemmie, and Emily first began singing together in Oxford as members of the Oxford Girls' Choir, before going on to form the trio in 2006 as well as forging their own successful, diverse careers. They draw on their individual musical interests and experiences to create thrilling timbres and a blend that has been described as 'one voice'.

Their interest in Early Music can be traced back to their performances and recordings of the medieval chant of St Hildegard of Bingen, which they learned as members of Stevie Wishart's group, Sinfonye. The singers still perform with Sinfonye today and as a trio, Voice continues to perform Hildegard's music and have commissioned new works inspired by her words and chant.

The trio has toured throughout the UK, USA 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 in Galicia in September 2019; and Leoš Janáček's The Diary of One Who Disappeared; Moravian Folksongs; Říkadla with Julius Drake and Nicky Spence (Hyperion, 2019). "The arrival of the siren-like trio... is heart-stopping and haunting in equal measure" (Gramophone Recording of the Month).

Voice released their latest album, *Hildegard Portraits* on SOMM Recordings in June 2022. 4.5\* "beauty and precision.. Highly recommended" - James Manheim, AllMusic. They continue to tour their multimedia show *Hildegard Transfigured*, with visual artist Innerstrings, described as "transfixing" Opera Today & received 4\* review The Guardian.

[www.voicetrio.co.uk](http://www.voicetrio.co.uk)

### **Innerstrings**

Innerstrings is a videographer and visual artist, based in Lewes Sussex. Having built a reputation for live feed and 60s style liquid visuals, Innerstrings (aka Chris Tomsett) also creates visuals mixing these disciplines with digitally created sound reactive content; all live and completely improvised. Chris has also earned a reputation for producing music videos, with clients including Andy Bell (Ride/Oasis), Cheval Sombre, bdrmm and Jetstream Pony. As well as touring with artists as diverse as Ulrich Schnauss, The Bluetones, Josefin Öhrn, and Uncle Acid and the Deadbeats, he has also produced visuals for dance music duo Overmono's live show.

[linktr.ee/Innerstrings](http://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 performances which draw on hugely diverse influences. She has also created works for The Hermes Experiment, Phaedra Ensemble, Aldeburgh Festival and is a frequent collaborator at Shakespeare's Globe and with Radiohead's Philip Selway. Cellist with the Elysian Quartet for 15 years, she has also worked with Meredith Monk, Björk, Simon Fisher Turner and Kae Tempest among many others.

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