

Hildegard Transfigured: a medieval trance for the 21st century

Hildegard Transfigured is a collaborative piece of concert-theatre by Voice, visual artist Innerstrings, and composer Laura Moody. Tonight's performance is a specially adapted version for Finding a Voice Festival, featuring music exclusively by female composers.

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.

"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)

We were introduced to Hildegard's music in our teens, performing and recording with Stevie Wishart's group *Sinfonye*. We 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.

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.

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.

[Our programme notes reference to the following publications](#)

Joseph L Baird and Radd K Ehrman (2006) *The Personal Correspondence of Hildegard of Bingen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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

Fiona Maddox (2013) *Hildegard of Bingen The Woman of Her Age*. London: Faber and Faber.

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

Charles Singer, (1917) 'The scientific views and visions of Saint Hildegard (1098–1180)' in C. Singer (ed.), *Studies in the History and Method of Science*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Running Order

Antiphona: O successores St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Psalm antiphon for Confessors

Responsorium: Favus distillans St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Responsory for St. Ursula and Companions, likely for Matins

Humility and Universe as Body

Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

Antiphona: O virtus sapientie St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

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 (12thC)

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 (12thC)

Antiphon for Dedication of a Church

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: Caritas habundat St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Antiphon for the Holy Spirit as Divine Love

Antiphona: Unde quocumque venientes St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Antiphon for St. Ursula

The Living Light

Hildegard Portraits, Laura Moody for Voice (2021)

Sung Texts

Antiphona: O successores St Hildegard of Bingen (12thC)

Psalm antiphons for Confessors

Performing edition by Stevie Wishart, arranged by Stevie Wishart

Translation © Richard Vendome

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
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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

<p>Favus distillans Ursula virgo fuit, que Agnum Dei amplecti desideravit.</p> <p><i>Mel et lac sub lingua eius, quia pomiferum hortum et flores florum in turba virginum ad se collegit.</i></p> <p>Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.</p> <p><i>Mel..</i></p>	<p>A dripping honeycomb was Ursula the virgin, who desired to embrace the Lamb of God.</p> <p><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></p> <p>Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.</p> <p><i>Milk..</i></p>
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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.

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

O virtus sapientie que circuiens cicuisti 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	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.
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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
Gimeldia	Pine

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 loifolum (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 loifolum (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 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: Caritas habundat St Hildegard of Bingen

Antiphon for the Holy Spirit as Divine Love

Translation credit © Stevie Wishart

Caritas habundat in omnia, De imis excellentissima supersidera Atque amantissima in omnia, Qui a summo Regi osculum pacis dedit	Charity abounds in everything, From the depths to the highest place above the stars, And is the most loving in all things, Because it has given the High King the kiss of peace.
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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,

In 2021 Voice launched the exciting collaborative programme *Hildegard Transfigured: a medieval trance for the 21st Century* with psychedelic visual artist Innerstrings and composer Laura Moody supported by Help Musicians Fusion Fund & Touring Fund (2023), described as “transfixing” Opera Today & received 4* review The Guardian. They have performed this programme across the UK including for the Barbican Centre, RWCMD, Oxford International Song Festival, Swaledale Festival & Brighton Early Music Festival. Voice are delighted to have been invited to Classical:Next conference (Budapest, April 2026) to pitch their unique show to a European market.

In June 2022 they released an album of this programme called ‘Hildegard Portraits’ on SOMM Recordings – 4.5* “Many will be drawn, as with Voice’s other albums, to the beauty and precision of the three-part female harmonies, but this album additionally represents a fresh way of presenting medieval chant, and it’s highly recommended, especially to those contemplating chant repertoires other than the music of Hildegard.” —James Manheim, AllMusic .

In 2024 Voice were commissioned by the British Library to create a programme that responded to the acclaimed exhibition - ‘Medieval Women: In their own words’. Voice’s programme *Medieval Women in Song* was developed for the exhibition and the trio have performed it across the UK and now in Ireland for Finding a Voice Festival.

Voice were thrilled to have been awarded the Eye Music Trust / Rawsthorn Fund to commission British composer Deborah Pritchard to create a new piece ‘Adoration of Colour’ for Colourscape, which premiered in London last year.

 [Adoration of Colour - live performance showreel](#)

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

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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Calligraphy by **Tabitha Lincoln**