The Living Word
MUSIC BY, AND INSPIRED BY HILDEGARD VON BINGEN
MODERN/medieval voices
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*Commissioned by Modern Medieval Voices

MODERN MEDIEVAL VOICES
JACQUELINE HORNER-KWIA TEK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatek | Chloe Holgate | Martha Cluver
ModernMedieval Voices presents a program of chants by Hildegard von Bingen paired with new works inspired by her music, her life and her message. The title *The Living Word* refers to the fact that Hildegard was a pioneer – a woman ahead of her time. Her words, music, and achievements continue to resonate today.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) is revered as a mystic, poetess, composer and visionary. Her music consists of over 70 chants known collectively as *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (*Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelations*) and her morality play *Ordo virtutum* (*Play of the Virtues*), which includes more than 80 songs.

Given to the monastery at Disibodenberg when she was a child, Hildegard was placed under the care of the anchoress Jutta of Sponheim, a woman who devoted herself to the teachings of God and education of girls. Over the years the community of women grew under Hildegard and Jutta’s guidance and upon Jutta’s death in 1136 Hildegard took over as magistra, or leader, of the community. In 1150, after leaving Disibodenberg, Hildegard and her nuns moved to Bingen and re-founded the monastery of Saint Rupert on the Rhine.

Hildegard wrote two large-scale chants to commemorate Saint Disibode and Saint Rupert – *O Presul vere Civitatis* and *O Jerusalem* - which begin and end our program. These chants are examples of a sequence – a form of composition common in the Twelfth Century consisting of versicles, that is a verse divided into two parts. Usually both parts of a verse were set to the same melody, with each subsequent verse having a different melody, producing the melodic structure of AA, BB, CC etc. Hildegard departed frequently from this format; often the second part of each versicle is an elaboration of the material in the first, becoming increasingly inventive as the piece progresses and the poetic stanzas lengthen.

The three short chants *Karitas Habundat*, *O Virtus Sapientie* and *Spiritus Sanctus Vivificans* portray Hildegard’s vision of the Holy Spirit as the Divine Feminine, a being representing Love (Karitas) and Wisdom (Sapientia), who protects and inspires humanity. *O Viridissima Virga* is a rapturous hymn portraying the Virgin Mary as the bringer of new life through poetic images of nature’s renewal.

The four pieces by Daniel Thomas Davis, Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatek, Caroline Shaw, and Caleb Burhans were all commissioned by ModernMedieval, and represent each composer’s unique approach to interpreting and reinventing Hildegard’s musical language and philosophy.

*Three-Winged Wisdom*, by Daniel Thomas Davis, expands on the melody of *O Virtus Sapientie* underpinned with a pulsing rhythmic figure that uses text from Hildegard’s *Lingua Ignota*: an invented, secret language she devised for reasons that still remain unclear. The result is two fundamentally separate musical layers, each informing the other but each with its own distinct language and personality.

Jacqueline Horner-Kwatek’s *Meditation* is inspired by Hildegard’s vision of wisdom and love as embodiments of the Divine Feminine. It is a meditation on the nature and beauty of Wisdom, using drones and melodic motives that are hallmarks of Hildegard’s compositional style.

Caroline Shaw’s *Caritas Abundat* deconstructs the text of the Hildegard chant, allowing the voices to contemplate the words, and their meaning, through repetition and soaring melodic lines.

*We Cannot Live*, by Caleb Burhans, is a setting of an excerpt from an article written by Elaine Bellezza entitled ‘Hildegard von Bingen, Warrior of Light’ – the text frequently has been attributed to Hildegard herself. The piece uses cyclical melodic and rhythmic figures to create an hypnotic examination of the text and its message.

Program notes by Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatek.
Modern Medieval Voices:

“They sang exquisitely together, their voices so tightly intertwined that they often sounded as one clear strand….an evening of gloriously clear voices singing exquisitely wrought music spanning centuries.

(Steven Pisano, Feast of Music)
ModernMedieval was created by Dr. Jacqueline Horner-Kwiatek, a member of the world-renowned vocal quartet Anonymous 4, to explore the worlds of early and new music through lectures, workshops, masterclasses and performances. ModernMedieval Voices (MMV) is a project-based all-female ensemble directed by Jacqueline. She is joined by early and new music specialists for concerts and special projects that combine medieval chant and polyphony with music from later eras and new commissions influenced by the poetry and sonorities of music from the Middle Ages.

ModernMedieval Voices takes the vocal techniques developed by Anonymous 4 for singing this repertoire and combines them with a fresh approach to programming that introduces this wonderful music to new audiences.

The Ensemble gave a triumphant debut performance at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC performing the Hildegard chant O Jerusalem as part of the Al-Quds:Jerusalem concert with MetLive Arts, described by Heidi Waleson of The Wall Street Journal as ‘exquisitely sung’. MMV has given performances at The National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington D.C., The Virginia Arts Festival, and the Ecstatic Music Festival in New York City, broadcast live on WNYC NewSounds Live, hosted by John Schaefer. The Ensemble has also given residencies and performances at Notre Dame University, East Carolina University NewMusic Initiative, Florida’s University of Tampa, Binghamton University, Pittsburgh Dance Project, Liquid Music in Saint Paul Minnesota, Princeton University Sound Kitchen, Electric Earth Concerts in New Hampshire, Dumbarton Oaks, and The Cloisters in New York City as part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s MetLiveArts series. They are also featured on the award-winning album To Shiver the Sky with music by Christopher Tin, which received its world première performance on May 2022 in Washington DC. This is The Ensemble’s debut recording of The Living Word will be released in early 2023.

www.modernmedieval.org

“Although more than eight centuries separate us from this music, ModernMedieval’s approach to Hildegard is above all natural, emphasizing her fluent expressivity in perfect medieval Latin. Hildegard is always a good listen, and juxtaposed with sympathetic contemporary works, her beauties were especially resplendent.”
(Patrick Rucker, The Washington Post)
O Presul Vere Civitatis

O Presul vere civitatis
qui in templo angularis lapidis
ascendens in celum
in terra prostrates fuisti
propter Deum.

Tu, peregrinus a semine mundi,
desiderasti exul fieri
propter amorem Christi.

O mons clause mentis
tu assidue pulcram faciem aperuisti
in speculo columbe.

Tu in absconso latuisti,
inebriatus odore florum,
per cancellos sanctorum
emicans Deo.

O culmen in clavibus celi,
quod propter perspicuam vitam
mundum vendidisti
hoc certamen, alme confessor,
semper habes in Domino.

In tua enim mente
fons vivus clarissima luce
purissimos rivulos eduxit
per viam salutis.

O dance-leader of the true city,
who in the temple with the finial-stone
soaring Heavenwards
was prostrate on the earth
on behalf of God.

You, wanderer of the seed of Man,
longed to be an exile
for the love of Christ.

O summit of the cloistered mind
you tirelessly showed a beautiful face
in the mirror of the dove.

You lived hidden in a secluded place,
intoxicated with the aroma of flowers,
reaching forth to God
through the lattices of the saints.

O gable on the cloisters of Heaven,
because you have bartered the world
for an unclouded life
you will always, nourishing witness,
have this prize in the Lord.

For in your mind
the living fountain in clearest light
courses purest rills
through the channel of salvation.
Tu magna turris
ante altare summi Dei
et huius turris culmen obumbrasti
per fumum aromatum.

O Disibod, in tuo lumine,
per exempla puri soni
membra mirifice laudis edificasti
in duabus partibus
per Filium Hominis.

In alto stas
non erubescens ante Deum vivum,
et protegis viridi rore
laudantes Deum ista voce:

‘O Dulcis vita,
et O beata perseverantia,
que in hoc beato Disibodo
gloriosum lumen
semper edificasti in celesti Jerusalem.’

Nunc sit laus Deo
in forma pulcre tonsure
viriliter operante.

Et superni cives
gaudeant de his qui eos
hoc modo imitantur.

You are an immense tower
before the altar of God
and you cloud the roof of this tower
with the smoke of perfumes.

O Disibod, by your light,
with examples of pure sound,
you have wondrously built aisles of praise
with two parts
through the Son of Man.

You stand on high
not blushing before the living God,
and you cover all with refreshing dew
praising God with these words:

‘O sweet life,
and O blessed constancy,
which in this blessed Disibod
a glorious light
has always been built in heavenly Jerusalem.’

Now praise be to God
in the form of the beautiful manly tonsure.

And let the Heavenly citizens
rejoice in those
who have imitated them in this way.
**Three-Winged Wisdom**

**First Layer (Latin Text from *O virtus Sapientie*)**

**Second Layer (from Hildegard von Bingen’s invented language, the *Lingua Ignota*)**


**English Translation:**

Ash, Hazel, Sage, Feverfew, Reed, Horehound, Maple, Apple, Medlar, Oak, Periwinkle, Parsley, Celery, Sallow, Lungwort, Pea, Winter Oak, Shrub, Birch, Fir, Mountain Ash, Pimpernel, Galangale, Caltrop, Coltsfoot, Christmas Rose, Alder, Chervil, Hornbeam, Willow, Celandine, Lily of the Valley, Water Mint, Mastic, Quince, Cinnamon, Dill, Pepper, Pear, Southernwood, Dogwood, Violet, Hellebore, Peach, Spurge, Juniper, Horseradish, Ivy, Leek, Thorn Tree, Spurrey, Beetroot, Hemlock, Burr

O virtus Sapientie

O virtus Sapientie,que circuiens circuisti,comprehendendo omnia in una via que habet vitam,tres alas habens,quarum una in altum volat et altera de terra sudat et tercia undique volat.Laus tibi sit, sicut te decet, O Sapientia.

O Wisdom’s energy!Whirling, you encircle and everything embrace in the single way of life. Three wings you have: one soars above into the heights, one from the earth exudes, and all about now flies the third. Praise be to you, as is your due, O Wisdom.

Meditation

Spiritus sanctus vivificans

Spiritus sanctus vivificans
vita movens omnia,
et radix est in omni creatura
ac omnia de inmunditia abluit,
tergens crimina ac ungit vulnera,
et sic est fulgens ac laudabilis vita,
suscitans et resuscitans omnia.

The Holy Spirit: living and life-giving,
the life that’s all things moving,
the root in all created being:
of filth and muck it washes all things clean—
out-scrubbing guilty staining, its balm our wounds
constraining—
and so its life with praise is shining,
rousing and reviving all.

Karitas Habundat / Caritas Abundat

Caritas
Habundat in omnia,
de imis excellentissima
super sidera
atque amantissima
in omnia,
quia summo regi osculum pacis
dedit.

Love
abounds in all,
from the depths exalted and excelling
over every star,
and most beloved
of all,
for to the highest King the kiss of peace
she gave.
O Viridissima Virga

O viridissima virga, ave, que in ventoso flabro sciscitationis sanctorum prodisti.

Cum venit tempus quod tu floruisti in ramis tuis, ave, ave fuit tibi, quia calor solis in te sudavit sicut odor balsami.

Nam in te floruit pulcher flos qui odorem dedit omnibus aromatibus que arida erant.

Et illa apparuuerunt omnia in viriditate plena.

Unde celi dederunt rorem super gramen et omnis terra leta facta est, quoniam viscera ipsius frumentum protulerunt et quoniam volucres celi nidos in ipsa habuerunt.

Deinde facta est esca hominibus et gaudium magnum epulantium. unde, O suavis Virgo, in te non deficit ullum gaudium.

Hec omnia Eva contempsit.

Nunc autem laus sit Altissimo.
We Cannot Live

We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others.
An interpreted world is not a home.
Part of the terror is to take back our own listening.
To use our own voice, to see our own light.

O Jerusalem

O Jerusalem, aurea civitas,
ornata Regis purpura.
O edificatio summe bonitatis,
que es lux numquam obscurata.

Tu enim es ornata in aurora
et in calore solis.

O beata purerititia,
que rutilas in aurora,
et o laudabilis adolescentia,
que ardes in sole.

Nam tu, O nobilis Ruperte,
in his sicut gemma fulsisti,
unde non potes abscondi
stultis hominibus,
sicut nec mons valli celatur.

Fenestre tue, Jerusalem,
cum topazio et saphiro
specialiter sunt decorate.

O Jerusalem, golden city,
adorned in royal purple;
O edifice of highest excellence,
who are a light never darkened.

You are resplendent in the dawn
and in the heat of the sun.

O blessed childhood
which glimmers in the dawn,
and O wonderful time of youth,
that burns in the sunlight.

For you, O noble Rupert,
glittering like a jewel,
You cannot be hidden
by foolish humans,
Just as a mountain cannot be hidden by a valley.

Your windows, Jerusalem,
are wondrously decorated
with topaz and sapphire.
In quibus dum fulges, O Ruperte, 
non potes abscondi tepidis moribus, 
sicut nec mons valli, 
coronatus rosis, 
liliis et purpura in vera ostensione.

O tener flos campi, 
et a dulcis viriditas pomi, 
et o sarcina sine medulla, 
que non flectit pectora in crimina.

O vas nobile, 
quod non est pollutum nec devoratum 
in saltatione antique spelunce, 
et quod non est maceratum 
in vulneribus antiqui perditoris.

In te symphonizat Spiritus Sanctus, 
quia angelicis choris associaris, 
et quoniam in Filio Dei ornaris, 
cum nullam maculam habes.

Quod vas decorum tu es, 
O Ruperte, 
qui in pueritia et in adolescentia tua 
ad Deum anhelasti in timore Dei 
et in amplexione caritatis 
et in suavissimo odore bonorum operum.

In these windows you blaze, O Rupert, 
and cannot be obscured by the apathy of mortals, 
just as a mountain cannot be hidden by the valley, 
crowned with roses, 
lilies and purple, in a true revelation.

O tender flower of the field, 
sweet green of the apples, 
and burden without bitterness, 
let none stoop to evil.

O noble vessel 
which was not polluted nor drained 
in the dance in the ancient cave, 
and is not made vulnerable 
by attacks from the ancient destroyer.

The Holy Spirit sings in you, 
for you belong with the angelic choir, 
through whom you are honored in the Son of God, 
having no stain.

What a pure chalice you are, 
O Rupert, 
for in your childhood and youth 
you sighed after God in fear of God, in the embrace 
of Love, 
and in the sweetest odor of good works.
O Jerusalem, fundamentum tuum positum est cum torrentibus lapidibus, quod est cum publicanis et peccatoribus, qui perdite oves erant, sed per Filium Dei invente ad te cucurrerunt et in te positi sunt.

Deinde muri tui fulminant vivis lapidibus, qui per summum studium bone voluntatis quasi nubes in celo volaverunt.

Et ita turres tue, o Jerusalem, rutilant et candent per ruborem et per candorem sanctorum et per omnia ornamenta Dei que tibi non desunt, o Jerusalem.

Unde vos, o ornati et o coronati, qui habitatis in Jerusalem, et o tu, Ruperte, qui es socius eorum in hac habitacione, succurrite nobis famulantibus et in exilio laborantibus.

O Jerusalem, your foundation is laid with fiery stones, being the tax-gatherers and sinners who were lost sheep, but found by the Son of God they ran to you, and were placed in you.

Thus your walls blaze with living stones, who by a great effort of good will have flown like clouds into the heavens.

And so your towers, O Jerusalem, glow and gleam with the redness of dawn and with the incandescence of the saints and with all the treasures of God in which you are not lacking, O Jerusalem.

Whence you, O adorned and crowned ones who live in Jerusalem, and you, O Rupert, who are their companion in that dwelling, help us, who are serving and laboring in exile.