Ego Sum Homo
Musical visions of Hildegard von Bingen
Tiburtina Ensemble
Barbora Kabátková, Artistic Director
Margit Übellacker, dulce melos

Sequentia: O Jerusalem aurea civitas
Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179)

Antiphona: O tu illustrata
Solo: Tereza Böhmová
Hildegard von Bingen

Kyrie eleison
Hildegard von Bingen

Antiphona: O quam mirabilis est
Solo: Kamila Mazalová
Hildegard von Bingen

Conductus: Qui de Saba veniunt (instrumental)
Anonymous

Hymnus: Cum vox sanguinis
Solos: Daniela Čermáková, Tereza Böhmová & Barbora Kabátková
Hildegard von Bingen

Antiphona: O spectabiles viri
Solo: Barbora Kabátková
Hildegard von Bingen

Antiphona: Nunc gaudeant
Hildegard von Bingen

Conductus: Flos in monte cernitur
Anonymous

Antiphona: O beata infantia
Solo: Daniela Čermáková
Hildegard von Bingen

Responsorium: Ave Maria
Hildegard von Bingen

Antiphona: Caritas abundat (instrumental)
Hildegard von Bingen
Notes on the Program

Ego Sum Homo
God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:27)

Although the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis, highlights the equality of both the sexes created by God, the pejorative legacy of Eve’s original sin has dominated history and dogged womankind throughout its existence. We find that many of the newer books in the Bible delegate women to an inferior subordination to men in every area of human activity, with the obvious exception of motherhood. However, history has fought back—with words, deeds, and their consequences.

The twelfth century is one of motion. I dare claim that in many ways it is the most distinctive period of the Middle Ages—full of upsets, changes, and religious and institutional revolt. This revolt consisted mainly of an attempt to return to the roots, especially in monastic life, which experienced an enormous boom, not only due to the founding of new, reformed orders such as Cistercians and Norbertines, but also thanks to the reformative efforts of the Benedictine Order itself, which had until then thrived on its monopoly of monastic life. Of course, this did not happen from one day to the next, the changes were precluded by important events, whether it was the political-ecclesiastical dispute over investiture, which divided the Western Christian world into two camps at the turn of the eleventh century, or the rise of interesting personalities in the late eleventh century. One such figure was Abbot William of the important South-German Benedictine monastery in Hirsau. He was one of the first people who, despite his Benedictine vows, stepped out of enclosure and preached. His spiritual and innovative approach included the effort to allow a new kind of piety for women. For surely, the religious talents of women enrich the Church! This established the institution of double monasteries—a male community affiliated with a female one. This does not mean that nunneries did not exist as autonomous entities before, but their existence was certainly somewhat precarious.

In Rhineland, this monastic boom was very firmly impacted by Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), magistra of the monastery in Disibodenberg, later abbess of the Benedictine convent in Rupertsberg, a mystic, composer, writer, and perhaps even healer.

Her life is connected with many clichés and myths, which continue to be spread through various channels of communication until this day. But thanks to her Vita, which was partly written in Hildegard’s lifetime, and her rich correspondence, which she maintained with many important personages of the period, we can avail ourselves of an extraordinary complex of information regarding her person. And as Barbara Beuys writes in her biography of Hildegard:

Hildegard can be venerated as a saint and a visionary, and her texts can be understood solely as a spiritual-religious message beyond time and space. It is quite another matter to approach her as a historical person, to cast light on the contexts, to separate the holy from the profane, to discover her characteristic traits and antagonisms; only then do the person and the work gain comprehensibility and life.
We are therefore clearly confronted with a person, a “Renaissance woman” in modern parlance, gifted with supernatural visions and divine revelations, while at the same time remaining thoroughly realistic and pragmatic, keeping firmly to her opinions on the world, the Church, and monastic life.

Hildegard’s career was not set in stone, but as the daughter of a noble family she was predestined in a way—she was accepted to the Benedictine convent in Disibodenberg at a very young age. She grew up under the tuition of the strongly ascetic Jutta of Sponheim, the abbess of the female part of the monastery, whom she succeeded at the age of thirty-eight, to become the community’s second magistra. The struggle for an independent female monastery culminated in 1158, when the convent founded by Hildegard on St. Rupert’s Hill near the town of Bingen was exempted from the property of the male monastery of St. Disibod. It was not an easy path to take, especially for a woman. But she was aided by her visions. The voice of the so-called Living Light first addressed her in 1141, and as she wrote in the preface to her first visionary text Scivias (Scito vias Domini—Know the ways of the Lord), it was adamant and clear in its consequences:

Frail person, speak and write what you see and hear. Do not speak or write of it in a human manner, with an artifice stemming from human reason or with wayward human creativity, but instead in such a way as you see and hear it in heavenly reality in the miraculous acts of God… And suddenly I obtained insight into the interpretation of Scripture, the psalter, the Gospels, and the other Catholic books of the Old and New Testament.

Even as an abbess she could hardly negate the words of Apostle Paul, that women should remain silent in public and that men were to have monopoly on the interpretation of Holy Scripture. So it was her visions that freed her from this, no one could deny divine inspiration. From a modern perspective she can hardly be faulted for using her mystical visions to realize her life’s ambitions.

We know the names of only very few twelfth-century composers, and in most cases the name is the only information we have. Hildegard is a revelation from this perspective as well. Her works of sacred music, which consist of seventy-seven pieces, and the liturgical drama Ordo virtutum constitute a separate compositional approach inspired by the monophonic tradition of Gregorian chant, but which was like nothing else in its time, a distinctive approach that no one was able to continue. Although Hildegard denies having had any tuition in neumes and singing, it can be supposed that this was merely another gesture of a person who simply could not admit her own skill. But from her Vita we know that Mistress Jutta taught her to sing the psalms and led her to give praise on the ten-stringed psaltery. We also know that the nuns at Rupertsberg had mandatory singing lessons! It is not clear what such singing tuition consisted of in those days, but noting Hildegard’s difficult melismatic, often virtuoso compositions requiring a vast vocal range, it can be presumed that the lessons must have fulfilled at least some of the requirements of our day and age.

Hildegard composed her chants for both important and local feast days of the liturgical year—chants in praise of the Virgin Mary (e.g., the antiphons O tu illustrata, O quam mirabilis est, the responsory Ave Maria), of St. Disibod (the antiphon O beata infantia), St. Rupert (the sequence O Jerusalem, aurea civitas), St. Ursula and the 11,000 virgins (the hymn Cum vox sanguinis), the patriarchs (the antiphon O spectabiles viri), the Feast of Dedication (the antiphon Nunc gaudeant), and others. The lyrics of the chants are influenced by Hildegard’s mystical visions, they often quote the Living Light that spoke to her in her visions.

Hildegard’s music beckons to be experimented with. As something of a challenge, we chose an improvised accompaniment of the monophonic vocals on, let us say, Old-Testament plucked string instruments—the harp and the zither (dulce melos). The polyphonic compositions—the conducti Qui de Saba veniunt, Flos in monte cernitur, and Deus misertus hominis—originate from approximately the same period as the monophonic chants of Hildegard of Bingen, but they are from anonymous composers of the so-called Notre Dame school, which sources show to have spanned from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century.

Despite all her divine visions, Hildegard did not forget that she was human. She often asked herself, quoting Psalm 8: “What are humans that you are mindful of them?” At the age of seventy-seven she turned to criticism of humankind in her correspondence:

People are uplifted to the stars by God through all his miracles, and yet they cannot stop sinning. I am a frail woman, but I am human. Many wise people were endowed with miracles, so that they proclaimed many mysteries. But for frivolous fame they ascribed these to themselves, and thus brought about their downfall.

Hildegard died at the incredible age of eighty-two. She left behind a striking legacy that has not been lost in time and will not be lost in us either. ♦

—Barbora Kabátková
Sequentia: O Jerusalem aurea civitas

O Jerusalem, aurea civitas, ornata Regis purpura.
O aedificatio summæ bonitatis, quæ es lux numquam obscurata. Tu enim es ornata in aurora et in calore solis.
O beata pueritia, quæ rutilas in aurora, et o laudabilis adolescentia, quæ ardes in sole.
Nam tu, o nobilis Ruperte, in his sicut gemma fulsisti, unde non potes abscondi stultis hominibus, sicut nec mons valli celatur.
Fenestrae tuae, Jerusalem, cum topazio et saphiro specialiter sunt decoratae. 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 o dulcis viriditas pomi, et o sarcina sine medulla, quæ non flectit pectora in crimina.

O vas nobile, quod non est pollutum nec devoratum in saltatione antiquae speluncae, et quod non est maceratum in vulneribus antiqui perditoris.
In te symphonizat Spiritus Sanctus, quia angelicus 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.

O Jerusalem, fundamentum tuum positum est cum torrentibus lapidibus, quod est cum publicanis et peccatoribus, qui perditae oves erant, sed per Filium Dei inventae ad te cucurrerunt et in te positi sunt.
Unde vos, o ornati et o coronati, qui habitatis in Jerusalem,
et o tu, Ruperte,
qui es socius eorum in hac habitacione,
succurrere nobis famulantibus
et in exilio laborantibus.

Antiphona: O tu illustrata

O tu
illustrata de divina claritate,
claro Virgo Maria,
Verbo dei infusa,
unde venter tuus floruit
de introitu Spiritus Dei,
qui in te suflavit,
et in te,
tesusxit,
quod Eva abstulit
in abscessionem puritatis
per contractam contagionem
de suggestione diaboli.
Tu mirabiliter abscondisti in te immaculatam carnem
per divinam rationem,
cum Filio Dei
in ventre tuo floruit,
sancta divinitate eum educente
contra carnis iura, quae construxit Eva,
integritati copulatum
in divinis visceribus.

Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Antiphona: O quam mirabilis est

O quam mirabilis est praescientia divini pectoris,
quae praescivit omnem creaturam.
Nam cum Deus inspexit faciem hominis,
 quem formavit,
onnia opera sua in eadem forma
hominis integra aspexit.
O quam mirabilis est inspiratio,
quae hominem sic suscitavit.

Hymnus: Cum vox sanguinis

Cum vox sanguinis Ursulae
et innocentis turbae eis ante thronum Dei sonuit,
antiqua propheta venit per radicem Mambre
in vera ostensione Trinitatis et dixit:
“Hae sanguis nos tangit, nunc omnes gaudeamus.”
Et postea venit congregatio Agni,
per arietem in spinis pendentem, et dixit:
“Laud sit in Jerusalem per
ruborem huius sanguinis.”

and O you, Rupert,
who are their companion in this dwelling,
help us who serve,
and who labor in exile.

O you,
illuminated by divine brightness,
Bright Virgin Mary,
infused with the Word of God,
whereby your womb blossomed
at the entrance of the Spirit of God,
who blew into you,
and in you,
sucked out from you
what Eve took away,
in the cutting off of purity
through the contagion contracted
from the devil’s incitement.
You wonderfully hid in yourself the immaculate flesh
through divine reason,
when the Son of God
blossomed in your womb—
holy divinity bringing him forth
 contrary to the laws of the flesh, which Eve constructed—
he, joined to wholeness
in the innermost parts of the divine.

O how wonderful is the foreknowledge of the divine breast,
which knows every creature in advance.
For when God looked upon the face of man,
whom he formed,
He saw all his works, entire,
in the same form of man.
O how wonderful is inspiration,
which brought man into being in this way.

When the voice of the blood of Ursula
and her innocent company sounded before the throne of God,
the ancient prophecy came through the root of Mambre
in a true showing forth of the Trinity and said:
“This blood touches us, now let us all rejoice.”
And afterwards there came the assembly of the Lamb,
through the ram hanging on the thorns, and said:
“Let there be praise in Jerusalem through the
redness of this blood.”

Antiphona: O spectabiles viri

O spectabiles viri, qui pertransistis occulta, aspicientes per oculos spiritus et ammutiantes in lucida umbra acutam et viventem lucem in virga germinantem, qua sola floruit de introitu radicantis luminis. Vos antiqui sancti, praedixistis salvationem exulum animarum, quae immersae fuerant morti, qui circuistis ut rotae, mirabiliter loquentes mystica montis, qui caelum tangit, pertransiens ungendo multas aquas, cum etiam inter vos surrexit lucida lucerna, quae ipsum montem praecurrens ostendit.

Antiphona: Nunc gaudeant

Nunc gaudeant materna viscera Ecclesiae, quia in superna symphonia filii eius in simum suum collocati sunt. Unde, o turpissime serpens, confusus es, quoniam quos tua aestimatio in visceribus tuis habuit, nunc fulgent in sanguine Filii Dei et ideo laus tibi sit Rex altissime, alleluia.

Conductus: Flos in monte cernitur

Flos in monte cernitur, gaudent cor amantis, circa florem, nemora, nulla vox clamantis. Locus est ydoneus, placito mandantis, fiat amor aureus, gratia donantis. Odor florum iunvenem renovans amore,

Then there came the sacrifice of the calf, which the old law showed, the sacrifice of praise, enveloped in diversity, and which clouded the face of God to Moses, showing him His back. This is what the priests are, who by their tongues show forth God, and cannot see him perfectly. And they said, "O most noble company, this virgin, who on earth is called Ursula, in the heavens is named Columba, because she drew an innocent company to herself." A great company—which the unburnt bush, which Moses had seen, signifies, and which God had planted in the first root in man, whom he had formed from mud, that it might live without union with a man—with a very loud voice cried out, in purest gold, topaz, and sapphire, enveloped in gold. Now let all the heavens rejoice, and let all the peoples be adorned with them. Amen.

O remarkable men, who passed through hidden things, looking through the eyes of the spirit and proclaiming in the shining shadow the intense and living light germinating on the rod, which alone flowered at the entrance of the light which caused it to take root. You ancient saints, you foretold the salvation of exiled souls, who had been sunk in death, you who turned like wheels, wondrously speaking the mysteries of the mountain, which touches heaven, by anointing passing through many waters, when among you there arose a shining lantern, which, running ahead, showed the mountain itself.

Now let the maternal womb of the Church rejoice, because in the celestial symphony her sons are placed in her bosom. Wherefore, O foulest serpent, you are confounded, since those whom your judgment had in your belly, now shine in the blood of the Son of God—and therefore let there be praise to you, King Most High, alleluia.

The flower is seen on the mountain, the heart of the lover rejoices; around the flower, woods—no voice of anyone calling out. The place is suitable to the pleasure of the one who commands; let love become golden, through the grace of the giver. The scent of the flowers renewing the young man with love—
thinking many things to himself,
he touches the flower with his mouth.
Bending his knee, rejoicing,
in honor of the flower,
he plucks the flower with his hands.
This is no time for delay!

Antiphona: O beata infantia

O beata infantia, electi Disibodi,
quae a Deo ita inspirata est,
quod postea sanctissima opera
in mirabilibus Dei
ut suavissimum odorem balsami exsudasti.

Responsorium: Ave Maria

R.
Ave Maria,
o auctrix vitae,
readificando salutem,
quaetem mortem conturbasti
et serpem controvisti,
ad quem se Eva erexit
erecta cervix cum sustellatu superbiae.

Hunc conculcasti,
dum de caelo genuisti,
quem inspiravit Spiritus Dei.

V.
O dulcissima atque amantissima Mater, salve,
quae natum tuum de caelo
misum mundo edisti.

V.
Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui sancto.

Conductus: Deus misertus hominis

Deus misertus hominis,
lavit reatum crimini
Eve per partum virginis;
O quam dulce remedium,
us vitium purgetur per contrarium;
fit electis compendium,
ne tedium fit currenti per studium,
si differatur bravium.

Ordo virtutum: Virtutes – O Deus, quis es tu?

Virtutes:
O Deus, quis es tu,
qui in temet ipso hoc magnum consilium habuisti,
quod destructit infernalem haustum
in publicanis et peccatoribus,

Virtutes:
O God, who are you,
who within yourself had this great plan,
which destroyed the infernal sucking in,
in publicans and sinners,
qui nunc lucent in superna bonitate!
Unde, o Rex, laus sit tibi.
O pater omnipotens, ex te fluuit fons
in igneo amore, perduc filios tuos in rectum ventum
velorum aquarum, ita ut et nos eos hoc modo
perducamus in caelestem Jerusalem.

Ad processionem:
In principio omnes creaturae viruerunt,
in medio flores floruerunt,
postea viriditas descendit,
et istud vir proeliator vidit et dixit:
Hoc scio, sed aureus numerus nondum est plenus.
Tu ergo, paternum speculum aspice, in corpore meo
fatigationem sustineo, parvuli etiam mei de
ciunt.
Nunc memor esto, quod plenitudo,
quae in primo facta est, arescere non debuit,
et tunc in te habuisti,
quod oculus tuus numquam cederet,
usque dum corpus meum videres plenum gemmarum.
Nam me fatigat, quod omnia membra mea
in irrisionem vadunt.
Pater, vide, vulnera mea tibi ostendo.
Ergo nunc, omnes homines,
genua vestra ad Patrem vestrum
ectite,
ub vobis manum suam porrigat.

Psalmus 8: Domine, Dominus noster

Domine, Dominus noster,
quam admirabile est nomen tuum in universa terra.
Quoniam elevata est magnificentia tua super caelos.
Ex ore infantium et lactantium
perfeci laudem propter inimicos tuos
ut destruas inimicum et ultorem.
Quando video caelos tuos opera digitorum tuorum
lunam et stellas, quae tu fundasti.
Quid est homo, quod memores eius.
aut filius hominis, quoniam visitas eum?
Minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis,
gloria et honor coronasti eum.
et constitui eum super opera manuum tuarum
omnia subieci sub pedibus eis:
oves et boves universas, insuper et pecora campi,
vulcures caeli et piscis maris,
quae et semitas maris.
Domine, Dominus noster,
quae amplissimae est nomen tuum in universa terra.
Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. ✦

who now shine in celestial goodness!
Wherefore, O King, praise be to you.
O omnipotent Father, from you a spring flowed forth
in fiery love, lead your sons into a right wind
of the sails of the waters, so that we in this way
might lead them into the heavenly Jerusalem.

At the procession:
In the beginning all creatures flourished,
flowers bloomed in their midst,
afterwards greenness descended,
and the man, the warrior, saw that and said:
This I know, but the golden number is not yet full.
You, therefore, look at the paternal mirror, in my body
I bear weariness, I also have no little ones.
Now remember, that fullness,
which was made in the beginning, ought not to dry up,
et then in yourself you had,
what your eye would never yield,
until you saw my body full of buds.
For it exhausts me, that all my members
turn to mockery.
Father, see, I show my wounds to you.
Therefore now, all men,
bend your knees to your Father,
that he might stretch out his hand to you.

Lord, our Lord,
how wonderful is your name in all the earth.
Since your magnificence is raised up above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings
you made perfect your praise, on account of your enemies,
that you might destroy the enemy and the avenger.
When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers,
the moon and stars, which you established.
What is man, that you remember him,
or the son of man, for you turn your attention to him?
You made him lower, a little lower than the angels—
with glory and honor you crowned him.
And you set him above the works of your hands,
you placed all things beneath his feet:
All sheep and oxen, and furthermore the beasts of the field,
the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea,
whatever things walk the paths of the sea.
Lord, our Lord,
how wonderful is your name in all the earth.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, and is now, and always shall be,
evermore and ever. Amen. ✦

—Translations by Shelagh Sneddon