

## **VISION**

### **THE IMAGINED TESTIMONY OF HILDEGARD VON BINGEN**

A shortened online adaption of the concert/play by **Clare Norburn**

Performed by **The Telling**

**Clare Norburn** *soprano*

**Ariane Prüssner** *mezzo*

**Jean Kelly** *medieval harp*

**Teresa Banham** *as Hildegard*

**Natalie Rowland** *Lighting Designer*

**Mark Rowland** *Lighting*

**Gerald Kyd** *camera*

**Jiva Housden** *sound*

**Ignacio Lusardi Monteverde** *sound editor*

**Madeleine Edis** *costume*

**Stephanie Williams** *Administrator for The Telling*

*Directed by* **Nicholas Renton**

*Written and Produced by* **Clare Norburn**

*Filmed at St Mary Magdalene's, Paddington on 8 and 9 July under Covid-19 restrictions.*

**Music – all pieces are by Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)** from the *Riesencodex* performed and arranged by members of The Telling

***O eucharisti\****: *Oh, St. Eucharis, you walked upon the blessed way when you stayed with the Son of God; you touched the man and saw his miracles with your own eyes.*

**Ave Generosa (1a, 1b, 4a, 4b)\*:** Hail, girl of a noble house, shimmering and unpolluted. You, pupil in the eye of chastity, the essence of sanctity, so pleasing to God.

Instrumental on **de virginibus**

**Columba Aspexit (1a, 1b, 4a, 5)\*:** The dove peeped in through the lattice window, from where a balm wafted from luminous Maximin. The heat of the sun burned dazzling into the gloom, from where a jewel sprang up in the building of the temple of the purest loving heart...

**O Pastor Animarum:** O Shepherd of souls, and o first voice through whom all creation was summoned,  
now to you, may it give pleasure and dignity to liberate us from our miseries and languishing

**O nobilissima viriditas:** noblest green viridity, rooted in the sun and in the clear bright calm; you shine within a wheel, no earthly excellence can comprehend...

Instrumental on **Studium Divinitatis**

**O viridissima virga (verses 1 – 4)\*:** O greenest branch, Hail! Sprung in the airy breezes of the prayers of the Saints..... For the beautiful flower flowered forth from you, which gave all thirsty flowers their perfume. And they have radiated brightness anew in fresh greenness...

**O Frondens virga:** O leafy branch, standing in your nobility, as the dawn breaks. Now rejoice and be glad and deign to set us frail ones free from evil ways and stretch forth your hand to lift us up.

**Final Processional from Ordo Virtutum (Order of the Virtues):** In the beginning all creatures grew and flourished and in the middle time flowers bloomed..... Now remember, that your eyes should never yield until you might see my body full of buds

*\*performed from the edition: Sequences and hymns, Hildegard von Bingen, edited by Christopher Page (Antico edition, 1983)*

**The performance is 43 minutes**

The Telling #HomeTour is funded by **Arts Council England's Emergency Response Fund** and **The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation**.

The films of *Vision* and *Unsung Heroine* are supported by **The Ambache Charitable Trust**, which is active in raising the profile of women composers.



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## ABOUT THE WORK

Vision aims to give an insight into the painful visionary experiences Hildegard suffered throughout her life, covering some of the core emotional moments in her life. This film is a shorter version of the live show – with two entire pieces cut and several pieces not performed in their entirety in reflection of the fact that watching a show online is a different experience with a different attention span.

While the script is grounded in research into Hildegard's life, I was actually more interested in exploring how she experienced those moments, than in giving a detailed historical account.

So Vision is “an imagined testimony” as Hildegard revisits and re-experiences meaningful episodes from her past. It explores questions such as: what did it feel like to be taken away from her family at the age of 8? How did she experience the visions which she referred to as “the Living Light”? What was the physical experience of her visions? What did it feel to have so much responsibility in an age when women were generally powerless and silent?

The meaning of the visions and their physical form is fascinating. Much has been written on the matter from several perspectives, including the well-known psychiatrist and neurologist Oliver Sacks, who concludes that Hildegard suffered from “scintillating scotoma”, a form of migraine. Hildegard herself wrote about the experience, explaining that she saw visions accompanied by a great blinding light, with her eyes wide open: “the light that I see... is far, far brighter than a cloud that carries the sun. .... I call it ‘the reflection of the Living Light.’” Sometimes she refers to hearing a divine voice which explains and introduces the visions.

There are so many extraordinary things about Hildegard that I that I couldn't cover them all. There are important episodes, especially later in her life, that I skip entirely. Instead I have tried to capture the frenzy of her activity on her major work *Scivias* which she wrote over 10 years in her 40s and 50s. *Scivias* is Hildegard's outpouring of activity, after, in her early forties, she finally is compelled to speak of her visions, rather than suppressing and denying them a voice, as she did throughout her early life. *Scivias* has been described as “a prophetic proclamation, a book of allegorical visions, an exegetical study, a theological summa. Finally, it may be considered as a multimedia work in which the arts of illumination, music and drama contribute their several beauties to enhance the text and heighten the visionary message.” (Heinrich Schipperges: *Das Schöne in der Welt Hildegards von Bingen.*)

Some of Hildegard's music is represented as the final outpouring of her visionary three volume work *Scivias*. It is almost as if Hildegard has no more words; through music she can "say the unspeakable".

Towards the end of *Vision*, Hildegard's own voice from *Scivias* begins to take over. You will hear her extraordinary writings about music. Here, as in *Scivias*, music has the final word, as Hildegard looks forward to her death in a symphony of sound. *Clare Norburn*

For further reading about Hildegard we highly recommend the book by The Guardian/Observer Music Critic, **Fiona Maddocks**: *Hildegard of Bingen: The Woman of Her Age* (ISBN 10: 0571302432 ISBN 13: 9780571302437 Publisher: Faber & Faber, 2013)