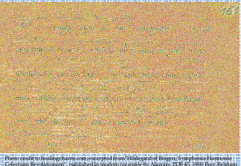




# New Voices and Old Songs: Setting Hildegard of Bingen to Music

Leisa A. Sunier, Greg M. Ellis, Jennifer N. Newton, Ben Hase, & Dr. Ethan Wickman\*  
 Music and Theatre Arts Department, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, sunierla@uwec.edu

## Abess



- Achieved all of her accomplishments within the confines of the monastery
- Her sisters regarded her as "reverend lady, sweetest mother, most holy teacher, and true companion in the mysteries"
- Hildegard had a different standard of teaching in which she was severe without being overbearing in the form of her religious ideas.

- Hildegard associated music to be the language of Heaven, and thought that if a person's soul was not moved by music, then they are in the presence of evil
- Hildegard was a prolific composer of monophonic chants, compiling the most chants known to us from the entire Middle Ages, even outranking male composers of her time

### From the Composer: Ben Hase

- I knew that I wanted to draw on Hildegard's sacred output because I love setting chant and working with the Latin Language.
- I decided to keep the chant line intact for my piece, slowing the delivery of the chant to allow the accompanying instruments to color the melodic line
- The instrumentation consists of a combination of familiar and unfamiliar instruments
- I added a small instrumental break before the final section of the piece and it ended up being one of my favorite passages that I have written for a small instrumental group.

## "Medieval Feminist"

- Known to be unique and innovative in her thoughts and actions
- Established a role for herself and her fellow women working within the confines of the patriarchy
- Trend in works: acceptance and allowance of the feminine idea, without rejecting customary masculine image of God
- Used feminine themes and symbols to describe her work
- Sought and found validation for her visions in the church community and was valued for her contributions throughout her life.
- Believed to be the first Christian theorist to appraise the nature of femaleness in a serious and positive light



### From the Composer: Jen Newton

Being a female composer myself, I was drawn to her contributions as a composer and writer from the perspective of being a woman

The lyrics for this piece are an excerpt from her *Scivias* 1. 4 in which she describes the development of the human soul throughout the course of a person's life.

- The piece is written for three female voices as a representation of the holy trinity, and Hildegard's devotion to her faith and the other nuns in her convent
- I wanted this piece to be representative of Renaissance counterpoint practices



"Hildegard was the only woman of her age to be accepted as an authoritative voice on Christian doctrine; the first woman who received express permission from a pope to write theological books; the only medieval woman who preached openly, before mixed audiences of clergy and laity, with full approval of church authorities; the author of the first known morality play and the only twelfth-century playwright who is not anonymous; the only composer of her era known both by name and by a large corpus of surviving music; the first scientific writer to discuss sexuality and gynecology from a female perspective; and the first saint whose official biography includes a first-person memoir."

~Barbara Newman

## Science

- The idea of wholeness and unity is central to her philosophies of the natural world and science
- Her scientific writings are heavily fortified with philosophical and religious justifications
- Causae et Curae*, her medical publication, laboriously details disease, sexuality, psychology, and physiology
- Physica*, included an extensive account of items of the natural world, including plants, elements, stones, animals, and metals
- Good health was to be achieved holistically, through a wholeness of diet, attitude, and balance with this universe (air, earth, fire and water)



### From the Composer: Greg Ellis

- I chose an excerpt from her text, *Physica*, because I wanted to focus on her biological and scientific contributions
- I chose a more contemporary approach, rather than sticking to her style, in an attempt to capture the essence of air
- In trying to capture the concept of "air," I used wandering, groundless harmonies and free floating rhythms.
- I used text painting to depict the wind "blowing" through the piece

## Life and Times

- Born in 1098, died 1179
- Dedicated to the Church by her family, and studied under Jutta

Many duties arose at Bingen on the Rhine, giving her skills in multiple areas

Chantress, librarian, composer, practitioner of medicine, reformer, correspondent

First liturgical morality play, *Ordo Virtutum*

Avidly involved in politics, and kept in constant communication with bishops, archbishops, popes, and other significant male leaders

In 1179, a formal bid of canonization was placed, although she did not officially become a saint until 1940



Elected prioress of the monastery, and in 1150 moved the community to the ruins of Rupertsberg in Bingen on the Rhine

Also founded Eibingen across the Rhine as a sister monastery

First visionary work, *Scivias*  
*Liber vitae meritorum*  
*Liber divinorum operum*

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