

## PROGRAMME

### ***Vision: The Imagined Testimony of Hildegard von Bingen***

A concert/play by **Clare Norburn**

Performed by **The Telling**

**Clare Norburn** *soprano*

**Ariane Prüssner** *mezzo*

**Leah Stuttard** *harp*

**Teresa Banham** *as Hildegard*

**Nicholas Renton** *director*

**Natalie Rowland** *Lighting Designer*

### **Music – all pieces are by Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)**

***O euchari:*** *Oh, St. Eucharius, 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:*** *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:*** *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...*

***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:*** *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...*

***Fronden 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.*

***O virtus Sapientiae:*** *O strength of Wisdom who, circling, circled, enclosing all in one life-giving path, you have three wings: one soars to the heights, one distils its essence upon the earth, and the third is everywhere. Praise to you, as is fitting,*

***Karitas habundat:*** *Loving tenderness abounds for all from the darkest to the most excellent one beyond the stars. Exquisitely loving all, she gives the kiss of peace to high King*

**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*

**The performance is just over 60 minutes without interval.**

***Vision*** is part of The Telling's ***Empowered Women Trilogy*** and is funded by Arts Council England, The Golsoncott Foundation and The Ambache Charitable Trust.



THE GOLSONCOTT FOUNDATION



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

## Programme note

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.

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 Schone 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 one of her visions retold in a rewritten and précised format and 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*

## The Telling

[www.thetelling.co.uk](http://www.thetelling.co.uk)

*"Inclusive... non-pretentious... I really wish all "classical" concerts were like this"* **Attila the Stockbroker** on our Christmas concert in Worthing 2018 in *The Morning Star*

**The Telling** has a growing reputation for creating intimate, staged concerts to bring early and medieval music off the page and reach wider audiences. We create a different concert experience, combining ancient song, ballads and upbeat instrumental dances with new writing, narrative,

readings or film. Sometimes we perform moving around the audience, using lighting and/or candlelight.

Formed in 2009, we draw from a pool of leading musicians who perform for the Society of Strange & Ancient Instruments, I Fagiolini, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Carnival Band and The Dufay Collective.

The Telling has performed 9 times at Brighton Early Music and is resident at Stroud Green Festival, North London. Recent engagements include Buxton International Festival, Little Missenden Festival, Colchester Early Music Series, Kingston Early Music, Leamington Music, Hastings Early Music Festival, Omnibus Theatre, Kino Teatr (St Leonard's-on-Sea) and Stoke Newington Early Music Festival. The group make regular appearances on **BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*** and have appeared on *Woman's Hour* and, in December 2018, on **Radio 4's flagship show *Saturday Live*** with the **Reverend Richard Coles** and **Aasmah Mir** performing and talking about carols. The Telling's new CD *Gardens of Delight* has just been released on **First Hand Records**.

*"beautifully borne"* **Sean Rafferty, BBC Radio 3**

Aiming to transform access to medieval music in England, The Telling is establishing a series of residencies initially targeting Liverpool, Hastings, Worthing and SE Devon. Upcoming engagements include for Stroud Green Festival, Totnes Early Music series, Lymptone Entertainments, Walthamstow Early Music Series and Liverpool's first Early Music Festival.

*"...There are some lovely moments as the medieval harp blends with the female voices in beautiful slow airs ... the blended voices work beautifully in the more contemplative repertoire such as is their lovely account of the 14th-century English carol *There is no rose...* this CD provides a pleasing and effective introduction to this repertoire."* **Early Music Review (Jan 2019) on our CD, *Gardens of Delight***

### **Teresa Banham**

Teresa's previous theatre credits include many roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as production at The Royal Exchange, Theatre Royal Bath, Hampstead Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, The Tricycle, Salisbury Theatre and Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie* for Theatre Clwyd. She has appeared in several Trevor Nunn productions, including playing Enid in *A Chorus of Disapproval* in the West End and played Anna in Nancy Meckler's production of *Anna Karenina* for Shared Experience.

TV includes appearances on *Dr Who*, *Call the Midwife*, *The Crown (series 3)*, *Waking the Dead* and *Silent Witness* and Rebecca in BBC's *Robin Hood*.

**Clare Norburn** studied music at Leeds University. She has sung as a soloist with many medieval ensembles including her own group The Telling, *Mediva* (finalists in the York International Young Artists Competition and selected for Southbank Centre's *Fresh Young Artists Series*), *Eclipse* and *Vox Animae*, with whom she has recorded and performed medieval abbess, Hildegard of Bingen's music drama *Ordo Virtutum*. She has performed throughout the country as a soloist including at The Purcell Room, The Bridgewater Hall and at leading festivals including Spitalfields Music, Brighton Festival, Newbury Spring Festival and Buxton Festival.

Since 2010 Clare has been developing a new genre of concert/plays for actor(s) with live music. Her most recent concert/play *Burying the Dead* was written for the ensemble Ceruleo, funded by Arts Council England, which will be performed 14 times in 2018/19 including at LSO St Luke's and was featured on Radio 4's *Today* programme.

Her *Beethoven's Quartet Journey* (6 concert/plays to accompany a full cycle of all Beethoven's string quartets) for The Dante Quartet was developed with funding from Arts Council England with the full cycle premiered in Lymptone, Devon. It featured on Radio 4's *Today* programme with performances

include Apex Centre (Bury St Edmunds), Tetbury Festival, Wimbledon International Music Festival and St George's Bristol. Extracts were performed at the Southbank Centre's Study Day.

Clare's third concert/play, *Breaking the Rules*, received a 4 star review in *The Guardian*: "vivid and daring one man psychodrama". It is a collaboration with vocal ensemble The Marian Consort, with actor Gerald Kyd as composer and murderer Carlo Gesualdo, directed by Nicholas Renton. It toured 18 major UK festivals/promoters in 2016 and 2017 including Cheltenham, Bath, Newbury, Brighton, Buxton and Lichfield Festivals, funded by Arts Council England and was performed at LSO St Luke's. It will tour again in 2019 to Bridgewater Hall, St John's Smith Square and St George's Bristol. She has written three shows about women (including the medieval Abbess Hildegard of Bingen) for her medieval group The Telling which are touring throughout 2019.

**Ariane Prüssner** was born in Hanover, Germany, where she studied opera for four years at the Musikhochschule before coming to London with a scholarship from the German government to do a postgraduate course at the Royal Academy of Music and obtaining a Recital Diploma. She subsequently won grants to study song repertoire and contemporary opera at the Banff Centre for the Arts in Banff, Canada.

She has sung as a soloist in the oratorio repertoire and in song recitals all over Britain, including Brahms songs at the Purcell Room, Messiah at Lincoln Cathedral, Bach cantatas at St. George's Hanover Square, Brahms Alto Rhapsody at Sewell Cathedral. She fell in love with medieval music, joining groups including Fifth Element, Third Voice and Mediva, all together with Clare Norburn. Mediva were finalists in the York Early Music Festival Young Artists Competition and selected for the Fresh Young Artists series at the Southbank Centre.

Ariane then moved to Barcelona, where she sang with the Chamber Choir of the Palau de la Musica Catalana, touring Europe with Marc Minkowski and the Musiciens du Louvre, Jean Christophe Spinosi and the Ensemble Matheus, as well as performing as a soloist at the Palau de la Musica, among others Handel's Israel in Egypt and Vivaldi's Gloria. She has recently returned to the UK, and now lives in Hastings where she has a growing singing teaching practice. She performs and records with The Telling including performances at Little Missenden Festival, Brighton Early Music Festival, Buxton Festival and Music at Oxford.

**Leah Stuttard** hails from a Lancashire mill town and has played the medieval harp for over 20 years. The first medieval music she loved was on scratchy out-of-circulation David Munrow LPs that she bought for £1 from the local library. She has worked with famous names such as Jordi Savall and appeared around the world from Mexico to Russia. For over 15 years she's worked with the lively Italian group, Micrologus and continues to provide them with a certain Anglo Saxon je ne sais quoi. She has created two solo projects thanks to funding from the Medieval Song Network and a commissioning from the Copenhagen Renaissance Music Festival. In France where she now lives she works with the edgy group La Camera delle Lacrime and she also loves singing and playing with her Nordic partner in (creative) crime, Agnethe Christensen. With her, she has performed across Norway, Sweden, Italy, Estonia, Denmark and the UK.

**Nicholas Renton, Director** comes from a musical family and went to Paris to study mime with Jacques Lecoq. After directing for theatre, he made several TV films, including *The Interrogation of John*, much of the BBC hit *Hamish Macbeth* starring Robert Carlyle, and *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Andrew Davies' adaptation of Mrs Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* for the BBC followed, and *Uncle Adolf*, Nigel Williams' take on the relationship between Hitler and his niece Geli.

Lia Williams played *The Russian Bride*, Guy Hibbert's modern version of *Therèse Raquin*, which won a FIPA Prix D'Or. After his TV film of *A Room with a View* with Elaine Cassidy, he went to Dublin to shoot the off-beat rom-com *Little White Lie* with her and Andrew Scott, then *When Harvey Met Bob* with Domhnall Gleeson and Ian Hart, the story of Bob Geldof and Harvey Goldsmith bringing LiveAid to Wembley. And three stories in the BBC series, *Musketeers*.

**Natalie Rowland** (Lighting Designer) has worked extensively in Dance and Theatre and has specialised in site specific productions. She has designed lighting for a number of early music productions and tours including Brighton Early Music Festival productions since 2011, including Orfeo in 2017. She lit Monteverdi String Band's *Il Combattimento* production in Venice and at St John's Smith Square for London Festival of Baroque Music. She lit the 18 date UK tour (2016/17) of *Breaking the Rules* by Clare Norburn with the Marian Consort, directed by Nicholas Renton, a tour of *Dr Dee's Daughter* by recorder consort Palisander and puppetry company Rust and Stardust, and Ensemble Moliere's production of Rameau's *Pygmalion*. She also worked on Clare Norburn's Purcell concert/play *Burying the Dead* with baroque ensemble Ceruleo, directed by Thomas Guthrie. She was guest lighting designer for the Baroque at the Edge festival 2019 at LSO St Luke's.