



(LEMS 8027)

UNFURLING LOVE'S CREATION CHANTS BY HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

In Praise of Sophia

Sung by Norma Gentile, soprano

THE STORY

In the fifth century, A British king bequeathed his fair daughter, Ursula, to the prince of another land. Ursula, not wishing to marry the prince, desired to follow her own heart into a union with Christ and the Church. She begged her father to reconsider the arrangement, and, failing that, she won instead the privilege of a three-year pilgrimage to Rome before the wedding.

She gathered about her ten women, who in turn each gathered another ten. The cycle continued until the party numbered eleven thousand women, their servants, and an escort party of male bishops. During their return trip from Rome they encountered the army of Atilla the Hun near Cologne, Germany. Rather than submit to the men of the army and serve then as concubines, Ursula led the women, along with their escorts and servants, to martyrdom.

In the twelfth century it was thought that a mass grave discovered adjacent to the Cologne Cathedral in 1106 was that of the martyrs. Another prophetically gifted nun, Elisabeth of Schonau, experienced a series of visions (1156-57) which seemed to confirm this. At that time a partially legible Roman inscription (XI MV) in the Cologne Cathedral was interpreted as XI Milles (eleven thousand) Virgines rather than the current reading of XI Martyres Virgines (eleven martyred virgins).

The music in this collection reflects aspects of St. Ursula's tale. The story is retold directly in O Ecclesia, while Spiritui Sancto reflects Hildegard's more personal view.

Ave, Generosa and Ave, Maria invoke and describe the Divine Feminine which Mary and Ursula personify. O clarissima mater illustrates the power of this divine aspect to bless and heal with the gentlest of sounds, while O splendidissima gemma is a revelation of its glory.

O rubor sanguinis and Rex noster promptus est share a concern with the paradox of blood. As one who ministered to the sick and dying, Hildegard experienced the shedding of blood as a precursor of physical death. Yet for a woman, the regular monthly shedding of blood is a sign of well-being. In her theology, blood became an element which is transmuted into an ever-giving life-force through martyrdom. Rex noster promptus est is dedicated to some of those martyrs, the children slain by King Herod. O eterne Deus, dedicated simply to God, opens as a quiet, inward prayer which expands to include a petition of blessing for all Life.

The symbiotic relationship shared by Jesus and Mary, the Divine Feminine and Sacred Masculine, is made evident in much of Hildegard's texts. Just as the Divine Feminine incarnate in Mary, loved and cared for the infant Jesus, He as Christ returns that love to the world. This is particularly touching in the gentle Caritas abundat in omnia and the joyous Hodie.

TRACKS WITH TIMES (Words below, beginning on page 3)

- 1) Rex noster promptus est Our King stands ready (4:29)
 - 2) Hodie Today (1:49)
 - 3) O splendidissima gemma O most splendid gem (3:54)
 - 4) Ave, Maria Behold, Mary (9:46)
 - 5) Ave, generosa I behold you, noble woman (5:41)
 - 6) Caritas abundat in omnia Loving tenderness abounds for all (:56)
 - 7) Spiritui Sancto Holy Spirit (7:03)
 - 8) O rubor sanguinis O ruby-red blood (2:12)
 - 9) O eterne Deus O eternal Lord (2:14)
 - 10) O clarissima Mater O luminous, shining Mother (9:54)
 - 11) O Ecclesia O Beloved (8:01)
- 56:59 total time

HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

The twelfth century was a time of rising feminine influence in the Catholic Church. Just as Ursula was believed to have led a large and powerful group of women, Hildegard's fame as a leader of women spread throughout northern Europe. This fame attracted not only many visitors to her monasteries, but also women wishing to join her.

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth child of a noble family. In order to give her an education, Hildegard was placed within a monastery at the age of eight. She chose to take the veil, and as an abbess she established and led two monasteries for women in her native Germany, near Bingen. She wrote two biographies of saints and books concerning medicine, herbology, theology. Her musical legacy includes seventy-seven sacred monophonic chants on her own Latin texts for use in worship services, as well as a morality play, again with both text and music of her own authorship. Gifted from childhood with visions, she experienced both images and sounds which she attributed to

heavenly sources. She described her music as translations of the sounds of the Celestial Symphony which she heard during these visions. She died in 1179 at the age of eighty-one, leaving behind a culture and world touched by the artistry of her deep spiritual expression.

NORMA GENTILE

Norma Gentile (BM, MM in Voice) developed her interest in early music during her studies at the University of Michigan with harpsichordist Edward Parmentier. She continued by moving to Europe and performing with Eduardo Lopez-Banzo. Returning to the US she pursued her interest in esoteric healing, studying and living in Emissary communities, and working with Seth channel John Friedlander and mystery school teacher Drunvalo Melchizedek. She coached historically informed choirs in both Europe and the US, and directed one of the first Midwest performances of Vivaldi's Gloria with members of Arts Musica on period instruments.

Norma mixes the chants of Hildegard, meditation bowls from Tibetan Buddhism and her own sense of healing energies into her singing. As an artist and a healer, Norma's concerts and workshops on sound and healing reflect her passion to bring music from the inaudible realms into the world for the purpose of healing the body, mind and spirit. This disc marks Ms. Gentile's debut appearance on Lyrichord. Her discography includes Healing Chants (HealingChants.com) and Meditation Chants (AveMariaPress.com). Her articles on sound and intuitive healing are published in magazines nationwide and many are available at her web site; www.normagentile.com.

WORDS TO SELECTIONS

1) Rex noster promptus est

Our King stands ready
to accept the life-blood of the Innocents.
Let angels sing and sound praises
while the clouds grieve over that same blood.
However the Tyrant is suffocated
in heavy sleep by his own malice.
And the clouds grieve over that same blood.
Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
As the clouds grieve over that same blood.

2) Hodie

Today a closed portal has been opened
that which the serpent suffocated
in the wise-woman is revealed to us.
Now the flower of the Virgin
is alight in the dawn.

3) O splendidissima gemma

O most splendid gem,
this fair grace like the sun
which pours through you,
is as a spring leaping from the Father's heart,
For this is His only Word,
and from this
the prime matter of the world was created,
which Eve disturbed.
So the Word was fashioned, by the Father,
into human form,
And therefore you are that one shining matter,
whereby the Word exhales all virtues,
drawing out all creatures from prime matter.

4) Ave, Maria

Behold, Mary,
you who increase life,
who rebuilds the path,
You who confused death
and wore down the serpent,
To you Eve raised herself up,
her neck rigid with inflated arrogance.
You strode upon this arrogance
while bearing God's Son of Heaven,
through whom the spirit of God breaths.
O gentle and loving Mother,
I behold you.
For Heaven released into the world
that which you brought forth.
This one,
through whom the spirit of God breaths.
Glory to the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
And to this one,
through whom the spirit of God breaths.

5) Ave generosa

I behold you,
noble, glorious and whole woman,
the pupil of purity.
You are the sacred matrix
in which God takes great pleasure.
The essences of Heaven flooded into you,
and the Great Word of God dressed itself in flesh.

You appeared as a shining white lily,
as God looked upon you before all of Creation.
O lovely and tender one,
how greatly has God delighted in you.
For He has placed His passionate embrace within you,
so that His Son might nurse at your breast.
Your womb held joy,
with all the celestial symphony sounding through you,
Virgin, who bore the Son of God,
when your purity became luminous in God.
Your flesh held joy,
like grass upon which dew falls,
pouring its life-green into it,
and so it is true in you also,
o Mother of all delight.
Now let all Ecclesia shine in joy
and sound in symphony
praising the most tender woman,
Mary, the bequeather of God.
Amen.

6) Caritas abundat in omnia

Loving tenderness abounds for all
from the darkest
to the most eminent one beyond the stars,
Exquisitely loving all
she bequeaths the kiss of peace
upon the ultimate King.

7) Spiritui Sancto

Honor be to you, O Holy Spirit,
who, through the mind of the virgin Ursula,
brought together a whirling tumult
of the purest doves.
Thereupon, like Abraham,
she relinquished her homeland,
and releasing herself from worldly betrothal,
she entered into the embrace of the Lamb.
So this pure golden army with flowing hair
passed over the sea.
O whoever heard of such as this?
For she released herself from worldly betrothal,
and entered into the embrace of the Lamb Himself.
Glory to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

She released herself from worldly betrothal,
and entered in to the embrace of the Lamb Himself.

8) O rubor sanguinis

O ruby blood
which flowed from on high
where divinity touched.
You are a flower
that the winter
of the serpent's breath
can never injure.

9) O eterne Deus

O eternal Lord,
it is pleasing to you
to burn in that same fire of love,
like that from which our bodies are born,
and from which you begot your Son
in the first dawn before all of Creation.
So consider this need which falls upon us,
and relieve us of it for the sake of your Son,
and lead us in joyous prosperity.

10) O clarissima mater

O luminous shining Mother of sacred healing,
through your holy Son you poured your salve
upon the wailing wounds of death,
which Eve opened as torments for our souls.
You destroyed this death,
allowing life to come forth.
Pray for us through your child,
Mary, star of the sea.
O instrument of life
and ornament of joy,
the sweetness of all delights
is forever within you.
Pray for us through your child,
Mary, star of the sea.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
Pray for us through your child,
Mary, star of the sea.

11) O Ecclesia

O Beloved,
your eyes appear as sapphires,
your ears as the mount of Bethel,
your nose as mountains of myrrh and incense,
and from your mouth issues sound,
as a multitude of waters.
Enraptured by true faith,
Ursula gave her love to the Son of God,
leaving behind men with the things of this world,
and she gazed into the sun
summoning the fairest youth, saying:
“With the greatest desire
I have longed to come unto you
and cleave to you in heavenly marriage,
hastening to you on this unknown path,
like clouds that in the purest air
appear to fly in sapphire.”
After Ursula had so said,
a rumor spread through all the peoples.
And they said:
“This innocent young girl is ignorant
of what she is saying.”
And in a single great sound
they began to mock her,
until a fiery burden fell upon her.
Then they all realized
that whosoever rejects this world
is as the mountain of Bethel.
And they also recognized
the sweetest aromas of myrrh and incense,
for disregard of this world rises above all.
Then the devil
entered into the bodies of his allies,
and these women,
in whom the most virtues had been incarnated,
were slaughtered.
Their voices were heard by all the Elements,
who came before the throne of God, saying:
“Ah! the ruby blood of each innocent lamb
is poured out in betrothal to Heaven.”
Let all heavens hear,
and in the greatest of symphonies
give praise to the Lamb of God.
Because the ancient serpent is suffocated
by these pearls,

made from the Word of God.

CREDITS

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I dedicate this album to those who sang and meditated, wherever they were, to hold open the portal through which this music came into audible form.

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