



ARSIS

Frank
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MOTETS

The Hildegard Motets
Six Marian Motets

American Repertory
Singers

Leo Nestor
Director

The Hildegard Motets

The Hildegard Motets comprise a cycle of nine unaccompanied choral motets using texts by the 12th century abbess Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). The texts were extracted from Hildegard's opus of more than seventy sacred poems titled *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum*. Although these poems have been translated into English (more than once) and some of the translations are quite brilliant, I chose to set the original Latin texts as I felt they remained closer to Hildegard's own thoughts. The nine poems used in this cycle were selected according to their appropriateness to seasons in the Christian liturgical calendar (thus, most of them can be sung in specific liturgical settings) and to their appropriateness to the structured plan of this cycle as well as for their sheer poetic beauty. Hildegard's poetic vocabulary was unusual and unique; she frequently used language that is not found in standard Latin liturgical texts. As with the music she composed, her poetry is highly ecstatic, vivid and rich in imagery.

The associations between the nine poems in this cycle and specific liturgical observances are my own and not necessarily Hildegard's, but the associations are fairly obvious ones. These are indicated in the printed score of each motet and are also shown below. The structure of the cycle is based more or less on the celestial hierarchy: God: Persons of the Trinity: the Trinity itself → Angels → Saints → The Church. Thus the order of the motets is as follows:

<u>Motet</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Liturgical Association</u>
I. O Verbum Patris	God the Father	
II. O splendidissima gemma	God the Son with his Mother	Advent
III. Hodie aperuit	God the Son with his Mother	Christmas
IV. O factura Dei	God the Son	Epiphany
V. O ignis Spiritus Paracliti	God the Holy Spirit	Pentecost
VI. Laus Trinitati	The Trinity (a summation)	Holy Trinity
VII. O vos angeli	Angels and Archangels	St. Michael & All Angels various other observances
VIII. O speculum columbe	Saint John the Evangelist	Day of St. John, Evangelist & other related observances
IX. Nunc gaudeant	Resurrection/Dedication	Easter; Dedication of a Church

The form of each motet was dictated by the text, so that each is different from the others. Text painting and numerology also played major roles, along with vocal color, in

defining the structure of each motet. (For example, *Laus Trinitati* is a glorification of the number 3 used on several different levels.)

The Hildegard Motets were composed in 1991-1993 as the result of a commission from the Chicago choral organization His Majestie's Clerkes. The work was premiered (to a sold-out audience) at the Three Arts Club of Chicago on June 13, 1993 by His Majestie's Clerkes under the artistic direction of Anne Heider in celebration of the group's tenth anniversary. One week later His Majestie's Clerkes performed the work again, this time at the Church of St. Paul and the Redeemer in Chicago.

This motet cycle is the second part of the *Hildegard Trilogy*, which is currently in progress. The first part of the trilogy is *The Hildegard Organ Cycle* composed in 1990–91 [and was recorded by the composer on Arsis Audio CD 101].

Six Marian Motets

Composed in 1994, the *Six Marian Motets* were commissioned by J. Michael Thompson, director of music and conductor of the Schola Cantorum at St. Peter's Church in the Loop, Chicago. The texts were selected according to specific associations with Marian festival days and consist of five English texts which are translations of Eastern Orthodox liturgical texts, as prepared by the Sisters of St. Basil the Great, and one Latin text by Hildegard von Bingen. In praise of the Virgin Mary, but without a specific festival association, the sixth motet could be sung appropriately at any Marian festival.

The general concept behind these motets was that they would be performable by a small choir (as few as eight singers) and appropriate for liturgical use but also adaptable to concert performance. Therefore, each motet is relatively brief and is divided into no more than four parts. The organization of the *Six Marian Motets* is as follows:

<u>Motet</u>	<u>Liturgical Association</u>
I. Motet for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (December 8)
II. Motet for the Nativity of the Mother of God	Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (September 8)
III. Motet for the Annunciation	Annunciation (March 25)
IV. Motet for Mary, Mother of God	Mary, Mother of God (January 1)
V. Motet for the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God	Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15)
VI. O frondens virga	Any Marian festival

The first performance of the entire set of these motets took place on August 7, 1994 at the Ukrainian Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Chicago with J. Michael Thompson conducting the Schola Cantorum of St. Peter's Church.

— Frank Ferko

The Hildegard Motets

1. O Verbum Patris

O Verbum Patris,
tu lumen prime aurore
in circulo rote es,
omnia in divina vi operans.
O tu prescientia Dei,
omnia opera tua previdisti,
sicut voluisti,
ita quod in medio potencie tue latuit

quod omnia prescivisti,
et operatus es
quasi in similitudine rote
cuncta circueuntis,
que initium non accepit
nec in fine prostrata est.

2. O splendidissima gemma

O splendidissima gemma
et serenum decus solis
qui tibi infusus est,
fons saliens
de corde Patris,
quod est unicum Verbum suum,
per quod creavit
mundi primam materiam,
quam Eva turbavit.

Hoc Verbum effabricavit tibi

*O Word of the Father,
You, light of first dawn
in a spinning wheel,
exercising your divine power in all things.
You, foreknowledge of God,
foreseeing all of your works
as you willed them to be
in such a way that it lay hidden in the center of
your potency
for you knew all things from the beginning
and you created
in similitude to a wheel
which encompassed all,
having no beginning
nor brought down by any end.*

*O most splendid jewel
and calm beauty of the sun
which flowed into you,
a fountain leaping up
from the Father's heart,
which is his only Word,
through whom he created
the first substance of the world,
whose waters Eve muddied.
For your sake the Father made*

Pater hominem,
et ob hoc es tu illa lucida materia
per quam hoc ipsum Verbum exspiravit
omnes virtutes,
ut eduxit in prima materia
omnes creaturas.

3. Hodie aperuit

Hodie aperuit nobis
clausa porta
quod serpens in muliere suffocavit,
unde lucet in aurora
flos de Virgine Maria.

4. O factura Dei

O factura Dei
que es homo,
in magna sanctitate edificata es,
quia sancta divinitas in humilitate
celos penetravit.

O quam magna pietas est
quod in limo terre deitas claruit,
et quod angeli Deo ministrantes
Deum in humanitate vident.

5. O ignis Spiritus Paracliti

O ignis Spiritus Paracliti,
vita vite omnis creature,
sanctus es vivificando formas.

Sanctus es ungendo
periculose fractos,
sanctus es tergendō
fetida vulnera.

*this Word to be Man:
wherefore you are that bright matter
through whom this very Word exhaled
all the virtues,
as he brought forth from this first substance
all the creatures.*

*Today for us there opens
the gate which had been closed,
which the serpent stifled in the Woman:
whence there shines in the dawning
the Flower from the Virgin Mary.*

*O God's handiwork,
you who are man,
he structured you in great holiness,
for that holy divinity humbly
penetrated Heaven's mantle.*

*O how great a kindness
that the Godhead sent as light from earth's dust
and that the angels who attend the Godhead
now see Him in humankind.*

*O fire of the Spirit Paraclete!
Living life of all your creatures!
You are holy, enlivening all creation's patterns.*

*You are holy, anointing
those dangerously broken.
You are holy, cleansing
those with festering wounds.*

O spiraculum sanctitatis,
o ignis caritatis,
a dulcis gustus in pectoribus
et infusio cordium
in bono odore virtutum.

O fons purissime,
in quo consideratur
quod Deus alienos colligit
et perditos requirit.

O lorica vite
et spes compaginis membrorum
omnium
et o cingulum honestatis:
salva beatos.

Custodi eos qui carcerati sunt
ab inimico,
et solve ligatos
quos divina vis salvare vult.

O iter fortissimum,
quod penetravit omnia
in altissimis et in terrenis
et in omnibus abyssis,
tu omnes componis et colligis.

De te nubes fluunt, ether volat,
lapides humorem habent,
aque rivulos educunt,
et terra viriditatem sudat.

Tu etiam semper educis doctos
per inspirationem Sapientie
letificatos.

Unde laus tibi sit,
qui es sonus laudis

*O breath of holiness,
O fire of love,
O sweet taste in our breasts
and inpouring to our hearts
with the pleasant scent of virtues.*

*O fountain most pure,
in which we see reflected
God's gathering of the strangers
and his pursuit of the lost.*

*O breastplate of life
and hope of the company of all its members,
O belt of honor,
save our blessed ones.*

*Guard those who are imprisoned
by the enemy,
and break the bonds of those
whom the divine power wishes to save.*

*O most powerful journey
which pervaded all things
in the high places, in earth's places,
and in all places below:
you gather and bind all the peoples.*

*You cause the clouds to flow forth, the air to move about
and even the stones to possess moisture,
earth's waters to make streams
and earth to exude its greenery.*

*And more, you always guide the learned ones:
through the inspiration of wisdom
you make them glad.*

*Therefore, praise be to you,
you who are the sound of praise*

et gaudium vite,
spes et honor fortissimus,
dans premia lucis.

6. Laus Trinitati

Laus Trinitati
que sonus et vita
ac creatrix omnium
in vita ipsorum est,
et que laus angelice turbe
et mirus splendor archanorum,
que hominibus ignota sunt, est,
et que in omnibus vita est.

7. O vos angeli

O vos angeli
qui custoditis populos,
quorum forma fulget
in facie vestra
et o vos archangeli
qui suscipitis
animas iustorum,
et vos virtutes,
potestates,
principatus, dominationes
et troni,
qui estis computati
in quintum secretum numerum,
et vos cherubin
et seraphin,
sigillum secretorum Dei:
Sit laus vobis,
qui loculum antiqui cordis

*and the joy of life,
hope and highest honor,
bestowing the gifts of the light.*

*Praise to the Trinity!
You are sound and life,
maker of all things
in their very life,
you, praise of the angel throng
and lofty splendor of the hidden mysteries
unknown to humankind, yet you are,
and you are life in all things.*

*O you Angels,
you who care for the nations,
whose form shines forth
in your countenance,
and O, you Archangels,
who receive
the souls of the just,
And you Virtues,
Powers,
Principalities, Dominions,
Thrones,
who are counted
in the fifth secret number,
And O, you Cherubim,
Seraphim,
seal of the secrets of God:
Praise be to you!
You who behold in the fountain,*

in fonte aspicitis.

Videtis enim
interiorem vim Patris,
que de corde illius spirat
quasi facies.

Sit laus vobis,
qui loculum antiqui cordis
in fonte aspicitis.

8. O speculum columbe

O speculum columbe
castissime forme,
qui inspexisti mysticam largitatem
in purissimo fonte:

O mira floriditas
que numquam arescens cecidisti,
quia altissimus plantator misit te:

O suavissima quies
amplexuum solis:
tu es specialis filius Agni
in electa amicitia
nove sobolis.

9. Nunc gaudeant

Nunc gaudeant materna viscera
Ecclesie,
quia in superna simphonia
filii eius
in sinum suum collocati sunt.
Unde, o turpissime serpens,
confusus es,
quoniam quos tua estimatio

the gentle place of the ancient heart.

*For you see
the strength of the Father's inner depths,
which emanates from his heart
like a countenance.*

*Praise be to you!
You who behold in the fountain,
the gentle place of the ancient heart.*

*O mirror of the dove!
Most chaste form!
You behold the mystical bounty
in that fountain most pure.*

*O wondrous blossoming,
you who never fallen or faded,
for you were planted by the Highest Gardener.*

*O wondrous calm
of the Sun's caresses:
you are the special Son of the Lamb
in chosen friendship
of the new offspring.*

*Rejoice now, Mother Womb
of the Church,
for in the heaven's harmony
her offspring
are gathered together at her breast.
Wherefore, O foul serpent,
you are confounded.
For those whom you thought*

in visceribus suis habuit
nunc fulgent in sanguine Filii Dei,
et ideo laus tibi sit,
rex altissime.
Alleluia.

*you held in your grasp
now shine in the blood of God's Son.
Now therefore, praise be to you,
O King Most High!
Alleluia.*

Six Marian Motets

10. Motet for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Today the beginning of our salvation is conceived in a barren womb, and Anna rejoices with Joachim.

Adam and Eve rejoice to be freed, and with them we also begin our hymn: Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you!

11. Motet for the Nativity of the Mother of God

This is the day of the Lord: rejoice therefore, O nations!

Behold the chamber of the Light and the scroll of the living Word has come forth from the womb,

The gate that opens to the Rising Sun ready for the entrance of the High Priest arrives today.

She is the only one who introduces Christ, and Christ alone, into the world, for the salvation of our souls.

This is the day of the Lord, rejoice therefore, O nations!

12. Motet for the Annunciation

Today is the fountainhead of our salvation, and the revelation of an eternal mystery.

The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel announces this grace.

Therefore let us exclaim with him to the Mother of God: Rejoice, O Woman full of grace, the Lord is with you!

13. Motet for Mary, Mother of God

Before the dawn of time Christ was begotten of the Father without a mother; now on earth He becomes human without a father, being virgin-born from you, O Mother of God.

Therefore a star announces the good news of the Magi, while the angels and shepherds sing the glory of your birth-giving: O Woman, full of grace!

14. Motet for the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God

Come, all you ends of the earth, let us praise the blessed passing of the Mother of God. She delivers her sinless soul into the hands of her Son; through her holy Dormition the world is given new life.

With psalms and hymns and spiritual songs the whole world celebrates in joy together with the angels and apostles.

Come, all you ends of the earth, let us praise the blessed passing of the Mother of God.

15. O frondens virga

O frondens virga,
in tua nobilitate stans
sicut aurora procedit:
nunc gaude et letare
et nos debiles dignare
a mala consuetudine liberare
atque manum tuam porrige
ad erigendum nos.

*O blooming branch,
beheld in your nobleness
as day's first light comes forth,
now rejoice and be glad.
Grant that we the weak may
be freed from our evil ways
and stretch forth your hand
to raise us up!*

Text translations from the Latin for the Hildegard works are by Leo Nestor with the collaboration of the Rev. Paul F. deLadurantaye. English texts in the Marian motets are taken from *The Festal Menaion*, copyright 1985 by the Sisters of the Order of St. Basil the Great, Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Used by permission.

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Frank Ferko inhabits a unique and unusual musical world. In the background is his love of the music of Olivier Messiaen. In the foreground appears mystery, and thus his intense interest and love of the visions of Hildegard as expressed in her poetry and music, and world of medieval chant. Mr. Ferko lives in Chicago. His music is published by E. C. Schirmer Music Company, a division of ECS Publishing, Boston, Massachusetts.

Leo Nestor, Artistic Director and Conductor, came to Washington, D.C. from Los Angeles in 1984 to assume the position of Music Director at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. A life-long devotee of and participant in the choral art, he pursued study in composition, choral music, conducting and classics at California State University, Hayward, and the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, where he received his graduate degrees with highest honors. Under Dr. Nestor's direction, the Choir of the Basilica has achieved national prominence and is acclaimed by the Washington Post as "one of Washington's secret treasures." A singer's conductor first, Nestor has envisioned for ARS a stylistic and vocal malleability of unparalleled diversity as response to the literature at hand.

The **American Repertory Singers**, Leo Nestor, Artistic Director, is a professional vocal ensemble resident in Washington, D.C. **ARS** singers are selected not only for their vocal ability and sensitive musical understanding, but also for their range of flexibility in matters of ensemble. Although **ARS** performs music of all periods, it particularly espouses American music, especially that of our day.

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Alto	Janis Brennan, Patricia Caya, Gail Collins, Patricia Ford-Smith, Virginia F. Gabriel, Lisa Koehler, Andrea Zuercher
Countertenor	Robert M. Petillo ^{1,2,3}
Tenor	Michael Ford, Douglas Gaddis, Wayne Glass ^{2,3} , William E. Lowry, Robert M. Petillo, Robert Vorst, Robert Zuber
Bass	Thomas Bold, Charles T. Bowers ³ , Mark H. Cobb, David Frederick Eberhardt, Ted Faris, Steven Kerchoff

¹Solo, Track 1 | ²Duet, Track 2 | ³Trio, Track 8

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