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Project PNRR AFAM Casta Diva

*An International Research and Production Digital Platform
on Women in Italian Musical Theatre*

Conservatorio Puccini Research Project

The role of women in the birth of Musical Theater

CONFERENCE & PERFORMANCES

in collaboration with VIII INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM Italy in Transit

FAU-Florida Atlantic University 4-8 February 2025



Research Project Director *Alessandra Montali*
Symposium Curator *Ilaria Serra*
Music Director *Federico Bardazzi*
Artistic Director, Florida Atlantic Opera Theatre *Mitchell Hutchings*





Conservatorio Puccini La Spezia, Italy
in collaboration with
FAU-Florida Atlantic University
IX INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM Italy in Transit 2025

Research Project
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SPIRITUALITY AND WOMEN IN THE EARLY FORMS OF MUSICAL THEATER

International Conference 4 - 8 February 10.00
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, USA

LECTEURS

Luisa Nardini University of Texas
Marco Gozzi Università di Trento
Alessandra Montali Conservatorio Puccini La Spezia
Ilaria Serra Florida Atlantic University

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

*Musical Creativity in Benedictine
Nunneries in the Middle Ages*

Luisa Nardini, University of Texas

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

*The Victimae Sequence and a
Women's Convent*

Marco Gozzi, University of Trento

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Opening of the IX international Symposium Italy in transit
VIII International Symposium & Italian Professional Development days

LECTEURS

*Women, Visionaries and Mystics:
Music and Liturgical Drama in Medieval Monasteries*
Alessandra Montali, Conservatorio G. Puccini, La Spezia
Ilaria Serra, Florida Atlantic University

Eugenia Amisano Sibyl

Maria Laura Martorana soprano

Arabella Kramer soprano

Elena Mele alto

David Paccara bass

Michele Bertucci flute

Donato Sansone flute, hornpipe, psaltery, percussions

David Paccara lute

Sergio Chierici portative organ

Music Director Federico Bardazzi

The Three Sibyls

The Sybil of the Rhine Hildegard von Bingen

Studio 1 Theatre FAU
Wednesday 5 February 19.00

AD MATUTINUM

**Antiphona O Orzchis Ecclesia, Psalmus 94 Ad Invitatorium Venite,
Exultemus Domino**

Maria Laura Martorana, Psaltery, Choir

**I Antiphona O Coruscans Lux, Psalmus 10 In Domino Confido
Eugenia Amisano**

Psalm Arabella Kramer, Elena Mele

II Antiphona O Pulchrae Facies, Psalmus 1 Beatus Vir

Arabella Kramer, portative organ

Psalm Maria Laura Martorana, Elena Mele

III Antiphona Nunc Gaudeant, Psalmus 86 Fundamenta

Ejus In Montibus Sanctis

Elena Mele, fiddle

Psalm Arabella Kramer, Maria Laura Martorana

Versiculum Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis

soprano Elena Mele, Choir

Benedictio Ad societatem civium supernorum perducatur nos Rex Angelorum

Arabella Kramer, Elena Mele, Maria Laura Martorana

Lectio

Narrative Voice

Eugenia Amisano

Arabella Kramer, Elena Mele

Responsorium O Felix Anima

Choir, Lute

V. Arabella Kramer

Oratio Deus, Qui Beatam Hildegardem Virginem Tuam

Maria Laura Martorana

Hildegard von Bingen - The Life

by *Federico Bardazzi*

1098 - 1105

Hildegard was born in Bermersheim, within the diocese of Mainz, into a family of minor nobility. The visions that would mark her destiny began as early as the age of 5.

1106 - 1135

She was introduced to monastic life at the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg and was placed under the care of Jutta, a young “recluse” nun who oversaw her cultural and spiritual formation. Hildegard suffered from severe ailments since childhood, which are now identified as “classical migraines.” This illness, which accentuated the perceived weakness inherent in the medieval conception of female nature, actually provided Hildegard with an appropriate mode of engagement in her time. Just like her “lack of education,” her physical frailty was not only not seen as an obstacle to a prophetic role but could indeed powerfully validate it. During these years, only Jutta was aware of her visions, which Hildegard learned to generally keep hidden, as these, like dreams, were not always considered a positive sign. There was a fear that what was perceived immediately and uncontrollably by the consciousness might stem from demonic suggestion.

1136 - 1152

Upon Jutta’s death, Hildegard inherited her role as *Magistra sponsarum Christi*. The new role as abbess and her attained maturity gave her the courage to make her visionary experience known. She confided in the monk Wolmar and, on his advice, began to write down the content of her revelations. Wolmar would assist her throughout her life, allowing her to express the necessity of communicating her insights. This process led her, even from this period, to a growing and profound awareness of her unique vocation. A young nun, Riccarda von Stade, also participated in the writing process, and a deep bond of trust and friendship developed between them. Her fame as an abbess attracted numerous young women from aristocratic families to the Disibodenberg monastery. The need to make space for an ever-growing community prompted her, as ordered in a vision, to found the monastery of St. Rupertsberg, where she moved with a group of 18 nuns. She was supported in this project, initially opposed by some ecclesiastical figures, by the Marchioness von Stade, Riccarda’s mother. After a few years, Riccarda was forced, despite Hildegard’s opposition, to take up the position of abbess at Bassum, where she died prematurely shortly thereafter in 1152.

1153 - 1178

Hildegard’s activity, initially focused within the monastery, began to extend outward. She maintained a vast correspondence with eminent personalities of the time, including Popes Eugene III (1148-53), Anastasius IV (1153-54), Alexander III (1173), Bernard of Clairvaux, and even Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. This outward projection from the monastery also manifested through frequent and increasingly intense travels, during which she visited,

among others, the Monasteries of Werden in the Ruhr, the important episcopal sees of Trier and Cologne, and the Cistercian Abbey of Eberbach. These visits were marked by an intense preaching activity, an absolutely exceptional fact for a woman. In 1173, the monk Wolmar, her trusted collaborator on the three prophetic works: *Liber Scivias*, *Liber vitae meritorum*, and *Liber divinorum operum*, passed away. The latter work would be completed with the help of Goffredo, a monk from the Abbey of Disibodenberg, who would later become Hildegard's first biographer.

1179

Hildegard died on September 17th after predicting to her nuns her imminent death, which had been revealed to her "by God in the Spirit of prophecy." According to contemporary testimonies, her death was accompanied by celestial signs, with luminosity and characteristics similar to many of the images in her revelations.

Hildegard von Bingen - The "Sibyl of the Rhine" by Federico Bardazzi

The aim of this program is to present the figure of Hildegard through her music, which has come down to us in the collection *Symphonia harmoniae caelestium revelationum*, starting, however, from her prophetic charisma, whose focal point is the *Liber divinorum operum*, the last work of the saint, divided into ten visions, preceded by a prologue and concluded with an epilogue. Some of the most salient parts of this exalted universal excursus have been divided into the three readings of the First Nocturn of the Matins of the Common of Virgins, which is here fully reconstructed and presented in its complete liturgical form: Hildegard's antiphons frame the invitatory psalm and the three psalms provided for this section of the Office of the Hours, while, after the versicle, the three responsories, also by Hildegard, comment on the readings. The conclusion is entrusted to the prayer of the proper *In Memoria Sanctae Hildegardis Virginis*, celebrated by the Church on September 17th.

In this way, Hildegard is portrayed as having a dual voice, both an instrument and a reflective mirror of the divine revelations, through the sound of both the spoken and sung word. The female schola (choir) functions as an idealization of the numerous followers of the saint. These were the first recipients of her theological and musical prophecies, spread across the monasteries she frequented, guided, and founded, whose branches remain alive even today. The soloist of the schola represents an ideal figure of a celebrant, a necessary pivot of the liturgical performance.

The cadences of the psalm tones are not exactly those of classical Gregorian chant; they have been partly drawn from those indicated by Hildegard herself at the end of some antiphons (e.g., the final cadence of the fourth tone), while others have been transcribed from the Antiphonary Graz 28, originating from a Cistercian monastery, monks of Benedictine origin like Hildegard, who were held in high regard in the spiritual and political circles of the time.

The choices regarding rhythmic interpretation, based on the *Riesenkodex* manuscript from


the Wiesbaden Library (in the other main manuscript, the Dendermonde, only four of the proposed pieces are present: *O Pulchrae facies*, *O vos imitatores*, *O nobilissima viriditas*, and *Nunc gaudeant*), were aimed at enhancing the non-mensural and fluid flow of the text, expressively emphasizing, compared to this “simple” general fluidity, certain verbal-melodic elements in relation to mode, the relevant important notes, and the structural notes.

Regarding modality, it is interesting to note how the differences between the authentic mode and its related plagal mode tend to thin out, often due to an expansion of the ambitus toward the higher register, typical of Hildegard’s hand. Another recognizable procedure of the author is to write some compositions on pitches different from those expected by the foundational mode. This is because, for example, some pieces in the fourth mode, like *Nunc gaudeant*, would otherwise require an E-flat in a period when the only transitional alteration used was B-flat. Hence, in this and other cases, a transposition to the fifth above is necessary.

To better explain these aspects, it is necessary to understand that the musical material used by Hildegard is primarily formed by a set of formulas that, in some cases, appear shifted in different registers and even in different modes. The art of the composer is therefore very different, in principle, from that of later centuries. As is the case, in certain respects, in the classical Gregorian chant repertoire, the characterization of a piece consists mainly in the selection of formulas and their “rhetorical-expressive” juxtaposition. This process enlivens the sound by molding it in symbiosis with the word, the true foundational element—semantic, phonetic, and sometimes even “figurative” through madrigalisms ante litteram. The verbal-melodic cells, thus developed, can take on various forms, through infinite variations, until they undergo substantial transformations of their own identity. The final result of this complex process is the absolute uniqueness, in its entirety, of each composition.

The sublime texts of the musical compositions are also the fruit of the saint’s sensitivity and, in a simple yet profound style, charged with emotion and lyrical plasticity, reach peaks of theological contemplation comparable to those of her prophetic works. This gives these pieces, although primarily written for communal use, a more intimate and subjective flavor, as noted in the virtuosity of certain melodic and melismatic passages, which offer an opportunity for solo performance of the Antiphonae, normally entrusted to the schola in this liturgical context.

The contribution of instruments finds its historical justification in the chronicles of the time, which tell of Hildegard herself singing psalms accompanied by the zither and psaltery. In the antiphon *O coruscans lux*, the vocal drone not only creates a sonic color but also enters into dialogue with the solo voice, reverberating and amplifying certain textual aspects according to some procedures used in the Middle Ages to expand the original text, such as the repetition of syllables (e.g., *O coruscans lux, lux, lux... or alta persona, na, na...*), or the insertion of brief stereotypical phrases (e.g., *Fuge, fuge et veni in palatium regis*). This practice still exists today, with some differences, in the soloistic pieces of the Armenian



Church repertoire and in the Arab *nawba*. It was from the Islamic world, through the domination of the Iberian Peninsula, that this choral participation in solo melody later spread throughout Europe, where it gradually merged into the more developed *cantus firmus* of the early contrapuntal experiences.

The choice of the *symphonia*, in relation to the declamation of the readings, aims to recreate the function this instrument historically had as the principal dialogic support for narration. In this way, the *Lectiones*, all with the same four-part structure, assume shapes that can be considered true musical pieces.

We opted for the Germanized pronunciation of ecclesiastical Latin, used in late medieval Germany. This choice is supported by some authoritative sources such as “*Aufführung-s-praxis Vokalmusik*” by Vera Scherr. The title of the program aims to emphasize another significant characteristic present, among others, in one of the most fascinating pieces offered, the opening one, which features in the text the originality of the inclusion of some words in a mystical and somewhat mysterious language that could be considered invented by the saint herself, where, for example, *orzchis* stands for immense. This fact is even more interesting considering that Hildegard never allowed the monk Wolmar to modify any of the words she dictated to him, in order to convey her visions as faithfully as possible, even if the Latin style she was capable of was, in some cases, not entirely adequate. This results in an individual and subjective language, almost the only one capable of expressing the supreme objectivity of God and describing it through words.

In conclusion, our concert aims to offer a possible contribution to the knowledge and appreciation, still too limited in our country, of the extraordinary figure of Hildegard, the first woman of the Western world to be recognized as a spiritual and cultural reference point during her long life, spent in tireless theological, scientific, exegetical, and musical activity. The prophetic character that permeates all her works, which have become cornerstones of our culture, earned her the title of “*Sibyl of the Rhine*” from contemporary chroniclers.

Regarding Performance Practice in the Context of Recording a Vespers by Johannes Berchmans Göschl Translation by Cristina Ramazzini

The vocal compositions of Saint Hildegard von Bingen present significant challenges in terms of performance practice. This becomes evident even to those who are not specialists when comparing the numerous available recordings, which often differ radically in terms of presentation and interpretation.

One of the difficulties directly concerns the issue of the intended use and purpose of the pieces. Although it seems well-established that most of them were conceived and composed for liturgical celebrations, it is difficult to formulate more detailed hypotheses about their specific purposes and the context in which they were performed. As a result, the question remains unresolved as to whether the pieces titled “*Hymnus*” were reserved exclusively for the


Liturgy of the Hours, and there is also uncertainty about the liturgical purpose of the pieces titled “Sequenz.” Additionally, doubts persist regarding the liturgical use of the antiphons, which exhibit an extremely rich musical structure in some cases. Certainly, the cadential formula of the psalm tone of the Germanic area, added at the conclusion of some of these antiphons, establishes a connection with psalmody. However, considering the stylistic and musical imbalance between the antiphon and the psalm, which is evident in these cases, performing them within the context of the Liturgy of the Hours appears challenging. And how should we address the antiphons that lack any cadential formula at their conclusion? At least the responsories can be liturgically placed clearly, as their compositional structure unequivocally resembles that of the *responsoria prolixa* of the Matins, the Hour of the Office recited during the night. However, these responsories also present a singular expansion of musical form, and they do not optimally fit the liturgical framework of a Matins.

But beyond all the questions about their purpose and placement within the liturgy, the idea of presenting some of Hildegard’s compositions in a liturgical context was enticing. To this end, the structure of a Vespers was used, consisting essentially of the following elements: psalmody introduced by antiphons, a reading with a concluding responsory, a hymn, and finally, the Magnificat introduced by an antiphon. In this way, the listener is required to take into account the musical and stylistic heterogeneity of some parts, such as psalmody and antiphons or intoned readings and responsories, as mentioned earlier. However, the context of a true liturgical reconstruction allows for the recreation of the spiritual continuum that Hildegard’s music inherently inspires, making it possible, or rather facilitating, the listener’s attainment of this deeper level. Without such a spiritual approach to Hildegard’s music, which testifies to a sublime mystical experience, it would also be impossible to gain a deeper understanding of her artistic uniqueness.

The true pivotal issue in the performance practice of Saint Hildegard von Bingen’s compositions, however, is the question of their rhythmic structure. This is primarily evident from the fact that nearly all the introductory texts of the numerous recordings avoid delving deeply into this aspect. The impression is further reinforced by the acoustic rendering of the recordings, in which interpretative choices that are diametrically opposed to each other manifest.

Indeed, there is a contrast between relatively rigid equalism and a mensuralism rich in nuances and with moments of extreme vocal virtuosity. In favor of the former, which is more deeply rooted in monastic tradition, are the qualities of precise objectivity, linearity, and clarity of expression, while the latter often benefits from vocal performances of good or excellent technical level, as well as considerable variety and liveliness in the musical discourse. However, both approaches seem to misinterpret the author’s intentions, although the former, with its consistent rejection of virtuosic rendering, may seemingly do greater justice to the spiritual dimension that pervades Hildegard’s works and the context in which they were created.

The interpretative question of Hildegard’s songs ultimately boils down to the inquiry: what




and how much can be stated regarding the rhythmic structure based on the two main sources, the Villarensen Kodex and the Wiesbadener Riesenkodex? An honest answer must be this: very little. But this little is already enough to set aside the position of inflexible equalism. It is true that, due to the purely diastematic notation of the manuscripts, it is impossible to determine from the shape of the neumes whether a rhythmically differentiated performance was indeed intended and practiced. However, both manuscripts also contain specific signs such as quilisms and liquescent notes, in addition to a system of grouping the neumes that is by no means arbitrary but applied logically and consistently; all these elements suggest that an equalistic rendering is inadequate. This conjecture finds precise confirmation when these passages are examined using modal analysis.

If the equalistic interpretative model can therefore be ruled out as highly unlikely, the question now arises as to the relationship between the musical values to be metrically and rhythmically differentiated. The solution of mensuralism and the consequent vocal virtuosity is not convincing. Aside from the fact that there are infinite varieties of mensuralism, as the discography dedicated to Hildegard's corpus highlights, the mensuralist position contradicts both the deep essence of these songs and the context from which they emerged.

The deep essence of Hildegard's music, as already emphasized, coincides with its spiritual dimension. Indeed, it testifies to an intense contemplative experience and expresses an inner and authentically mystical connection with the Trinity and its workings in the world and in the souls of people. Even the intimacy of such a divine experience, which emerges from Hildegard's writings, makes it unacceptable to think that the composer Hildegard would have envisioned an interpretative model for her pieces that emphasizes virtuosity. Sincere mysticism and virtuosity are deeply foreign to each other; they are mutually exclusive. This understanding aligns perfectly with Hildegard's music, as confirmed not least by the overall context of her life. Hildegard was a religious woman, an abbess of a Benedictine monastery. Her songs were largely intended for her own convent, which certainly had a musical preparation above average, judging by the technical difficulties present in the pieces, but which on the other hand certainly did not reach the level of a modern professional ensemble. To claim otherwise and to support a virtuosic conception of Hildegard's compositions contradicts a realistic assessment of the internal situation of a convent, both then and now.

From this perspective, Hildegard's compositions show a very close connection with the liturgy, regardless of the question of in what context and to what extent they actually found a place within it. But the musical language of the liturgy, which was known and practiced daily in Saint Hildegard's convent, and in which everyone felt comfortable, was that of Gregorian chant.

Hildegard's music must certainly be considered a late flowering of Gregorian chant, which undoubtedly transcends its boundaries in many aspects, but is nonetheless pervaded and animated to the last note by its spiritual force.



That being said, a solution to the interpretative problem of this music, especially in relation to rhythmic structure, that is solid and verified from every point of view is neither imminent nor can it be expected in the future, as the sources do not provide sufficient answers and even comparison with contemporary 12th-century music has yielded no significant results. But wouldn't it at least represent an important step toward historical truth if the formal criteria applied to Gregorian chant, considered the appropriate context for these compositions, were made the foundation of the performance practice of Hildegard's music? And what interpretation could be closer to the truth and more authentic, in the true sense of the word, than that of the nuns of Saint Hildegard's convent, who approach the music of their founding mother with this spirit and with the interpretative understanding derived from daily practice of Gregorian chant?

In the current state of Gregorian semiology, both equalism and mensuralism are to be discarded as models for interpreting Gregorian chant of the golden age (from the 8th to the 10th/11th centuries). It boasts a rich rhythmic palette, with differences not measurable in exact proportions and an infinite variety of musical expression nuances, as shown by the oldest neumatic manuscripts. This demonstrates that the word is the true source and very foundation of the chant, and that performers considered the specific demands of each text with fresh eyes and acute sensitivity. It is impossible to determine to what extent the subtle rhythmic variations of early Gregorian chant were still in use during Hildegard's time. Nor can our current knowledge provide any definitive guidance to establish precise criteria for the rhythmic interpretation of Hildegard's chants that would be faithful to the saint's intentions.

It is also problematic to attest to their notation at the time of the composition of these chants and their earliest manuscript copy. However, in any case, a performance based on a deep knowledge of golden age Gregorian chant, born from daily practice, will be able to respect the soul of this music. May this recording, deeply rooted in the vocal aesthetics of Gregorian chant on the one hand, and profoundly indebted to Gregorian semiology on the other, contribute its stone to the edifice of interpretations of Hildegard's music.

The Three Sibyls

The Catalan Sibyl

Studio 1 Theatre FAU
Thursday 6 February 19.00

THE PILGRIMAGE

Polorum Regina

Arabella Kramer, Citola, Choir

Los set Goyts

Maria Laura Martorana, citola, Choir

Imperayritz de la ciudad joiosa

Elena Mele, Lute

Laudemus Virginem *Maria Laura Martorana, Blanca Asturiano, Elena Mele*
Splendens Ceptigera *Federico, David - Sergio, Donato - Michele*

AD MATUTINUM

Ant. Christus natus est nobis cum Ps. 94 Invitatorium (4 g)

Choir, Arabella Kramer

Versiculum Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis

Elena Mele, Choir

Benedictio Benedictione perpetua benedicat nos Pater Aeternus

Eugenia Amisano, Maria Laura Martorana

Lectio Sermo Sancti Augustini in die Natalis Domini

Narrative Voice Eugenia Amisano

EL CANT DE LA SIBILLA

Eugenia Amisano

O Virgo splendens

Maria Laura Martorana, Arabella Kramer, Elena Mele

Cuncti simus concanentes

David Paccara, Choir, Lute

The Catalan Sibyl

Among the pilgrimage destinations, the Monastery of Montserrat, perched on the jagged peaks of the Catalan mountains near Barcelona, is the most legendary. Its staunch resistance to the Visigothic hordes earned it, since medieval times, the reputation of being a stronghold of Christianity. This program attempts to represent an ideal meeting between pilgrims from different places who encounter each other on their way to Montserrat to participate in the Christmas Eve vigil. Musically, we began with the *Llibre Vermell*, which was written precisely to provide an appropriate repertoire for the faithful ascending to Montserrat. Indeed, pilgrims were accustomed to alternating devotional songs with hunts and profane dances, often accompanied by minstrels and storytellers.

The statue of the Madonna, housed in the central chapel, is black, symbolizing the end of times, the looming apocalypse. In this chapel, the monks intone sacred hymns performed by the Escolania, the famous boys' choir of Montserrat. During the Third Nocturn of the Christmas Matins, a boy from the Escolania is dressed as a Sibyl and, blindfolded, sings the famous verses that predicted, even in pagan times, the coming of Christ and the end of the world. This tradition spread to Italy, Provence, and Castile, continuing for many centuries until the Council of Trent banned it. In this representation, we have chosen the version preserved in the Archive of the Cathedral of Barcelona, in Cod. 184, contemporary with the *Llibre Vermell* and particularly containing the full *Lectio* of the pseudo-Augustine on the prophecy of the Sibyl. In this period, Romance languages began to be used in sacred contexts, which is why we preferred the Catalan version from Cod. 184 (the same manuscript also contains a Latin version), just as in the *Llibre Vermell*, the two languages (Latin and Catalan) alternate.

The Gregorian chant section contextualizes the prophecy of the Sibyl in its original setting, the liturgy of the Matutinum, from which the medieval liturgical drama emerges as an irresistible need to represent what cannot be tangibly grasped. The Matutinum was divided into three nocturns, sung at different times during the night (the third being at dawn), each consisting of three psalms and three readings with corresponding responsories. It began with the introductory Psalm 94 "Invitatory" and concluded with the hymn *Te Deum*. After the Second Vatican Council, Matins became the "Office of Readings," consisting of three psalms and two readings with corresponding responsories, still introduced by Psalm 94 and concluded, on feast days, with the *Te Deum*.

It is worth noting that the first liturgical dramas developed precisely in the final part of the Third Nocturn of the Matins for Easter and Christmas, initially modifying and then replacing the last Responsory, as if the sacred drama naturally arose from the words of the ancient Church Fathers. In fact, the liturgical drama later moved, through some tropes, to the Introit of the Mass, which remains more impermeable to this form of spiritual expression, as it is already, unlike the Office, the representation par excellence of the sacred and thus more

rigidly formalized. For the restoration of the Invitatory Psalm and the Lectio of St. Augustine with the corresponding Responsoy, we used various sources, such as the Archbishop's Antiphony of Florence (12th century), and also the crucial comparison with the oldest source of Gregorian Office, the Hartker Antiphony (9th century). Regarding the Latin pronunciation, we chose one that relates to medieval Catalan. In fact, there is evidence that, despite Catholicism being centered in Rome, different regions of Europe in the late Middle Ages had varying sensitivities regarding ecclesiastical Latin.

The instruments used are replicas of original instruments from the period, based on extensive iconographic and scholarly research. As for the arrangement of the pieces, we followed a criterion that allowed space for the simplicity and strong expressiveness of the *Llibre Vermell* pieces through the practice of heterophony and improvisation.

In the *Cant de la Sibilla*, in particular, we developed the aspect of ornamentation of the solo vocal part and structured the choir's text according to a practice still present in the Arab *nawba* of North African countries. We know how close the relationship was between Arab, Jewish, and Christian cultures in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages, especially in the musical field. This process involves elaborating on the original text, specifically by adding repetitions of final syllables of phrases ("destruhira...ra...ra"), introducing stereotypical phrases drawn from the same text ("al jorn del judici"), and incorporating typical popular Arabic refrains like *ta na nà, dir na*, analogous to our *tra la là*, particularly suited to a commentary that, between irony and cynicism, somehow exorcises the prophecy of the apocalypse uttered by the Sibyl. The choir's function in this piece is therefore twofold: it serves as a drone, providing a sonic backdrop to the dialogue between the solo voice and instrumental improvisations, and it highlights some aspects of the drama of the text using the aforementioned procedures.

Federico Bardazzi

The Three Sibyls

The Italian Sibyl

Studio 1 Theatre FAU

Friday 8 February 19.00

THE PILGRIMAGE

LAUDA Del dolcissimo Signore

Maria Laura Martorana, Lute

LAUDA Cristo è nato et humanato

Elena Mele, Choir, Lute

LAUDA Dall'alta luce (*organ*)

AD MATUTINUM

ANTIPHONA Christus natus est nobis cum PS. 94 Invitatorium (IV g)

Choir, Elena Mele

VERSICULUM Diffusa est Gratia in labiis tuis

Elena Mele, Choir

BENEDICTIO Divinum auxilium maneat semper vobiscum

Eugenia Amisano, Maria Laura Martorana

LECTIO Sermo Sancti Augustini Episcopi in die Natalis Domini

Narrative Voice Eugenia Amisano

IL CANTO DELLA SIBILLA

Eugenia Amisano, Choir Iudicii signum tellus sudore madescet

RESPONSORIUM Verbum caro factum est

Choir

V. Arabella Kramer

LAUDA Gloria in cielo e pace in terra

David Paccara, Instruments

Matutinum in Nativitate Domini Antifonario arcivescovile di Firenze (XII sec.)

Troparium Casinense Biblioteca Vaticana Urb. Latina (XII sec.)

*Laudario di Santo Spirito Codice Banco Rari 18 Biblioteca Nazionale
Centrale di Firenze (XIII sec.)*

*Laudario di Sant'Egidio Codice Banco Rari 19 Biblioteca Nazionale
Centrale di Firenze (XIII sec.)*

The Italian Sibyl: A Sacred Representation

The Italian Sibyl's role in the birth of musical theater is deeply rooted in the traditions of liturgical drama and sacred representation. This project focuses on a representation that draws from the rich heritage of medieval Italy, particularly from the regions of Florence and Rome, where sacred music and drama were intertwined with the liturgy of the Church.

Among the pilgrimage destinations of Italy, the city of Florence stands as a beacon of religious devotion and artistic innovation. The Antifonario Arcivescovile of Florence, dating back to the 12th century, and the Laudari of Santo Spirito and Sant'Egidio, preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, offer a glimpse into the spiritual and musical life of the period. These sources provide the foundation for our program, which seeks to recreate an ideal encounter between pilgrims from various parts of Italy, converging to celebrate the Nativity of Christ through sacred music and drama.

Musically, the program begins with the Matutinum in Nativitate Domini, featuring the Antiphona Christus natus est nobis accompanied by Psalm 94, the Invitatory. The Matutinum, or Matins, was a nocturnal office divided into three nocturns, each consisting of psalms, readings, and responsories. The third nocturn, sung at dawn, traditionally included dramatic elements that foreshadowed the development of the liturgical drama. In our representation, we recreate the atmosphere of this nocturnal vigil, where the faithful would gather in anticipation of the birth of Christ.

Central to this representation is the Canto della Sibilla, a dramatic monologue sung by a soloist representing the Sibyl, a figure from classical antiquity who, according to Christian tradition, foretold the coming of Christ and the end of the world. This tradition, which was widespread in Italy during the Middle Ages, particularly in the regions of Tuscany and Lazio, was often performed during the Christmas Matins. The version we present is based on the Laudario di Sant'Egidio, where the prophecy of the Sibyl is set to a haunting melody that captures the apocalyptic tone of the text.

The inclusion of the Gregorian chant, Resurrexit Dominus de sepulchro, further contextualizes the prophecy within the liturgical setting. This chant, traditionally sung during the Easter season, underscores the eschatological themes of the Sibyl's prophecy, drawing a parallel between the birth of Christ and His resurrection, both pivotal events in the Christian narrative.

In this representation, the choir plays a dual role, both as a sonic backdrop to the soloist and as an active participant in the drama. The choir's text is structured to highlight the prophetic nature of the Sibyl's words, using techniques such as the repetition of syllables and the introduction of refrains that echo the ancient practices of Italian sa-

cred music. These elements create a rich tapestry of sound that reflects the cultural and spiritual environment of medieval Italy.

The instruments used in this performance are replicas of those from the period, carefully researched and crafted to provide an authentic sound that resonates with the historical context of the music. The arrangement of the pieces allows for a balance between the solemnity of the Gregorian chant and the expressive ornamentation of the Canto della Sibilla, creating a powerful and evocative representation of this ancient tradition. The program concludes with the Lauda Gloria in cielo e pace in terra, a processional hymn that celebrates the birth of Christ and the peace that His coming brings to the world. This final piece, drawn from the Laudario di Santo Spirito, serves as a fitting conclusion to the evening's performance, encapsulating the themes of prophecy, redemption, and divine revelation that run throughout the program.

In bringing this ancient tradition to life, we aim to offer a glimpse into the spiritual world of medieval Italy, where music and drama were powerful tools for expressing the mysteries of the faith. Through this program, we honor the legacy of the Italian Sibyl and the role she played in the birth of musical theater, a legacy that continues to inspire and resonate in the present day.

Federico Bardazzi

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