

**MONDAY
EVENING
CONCERTS**

**PIERLUIGI BILLONE &
HILDEGARD VON BINGEN:
FOSSIL VOICES**

December 4, 2017 | 8:00 PM
Zipper Concert Hall

MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS **DECEMBER 4, 2017**

Pierluigi Billone and Hildegard von Bingen: Fossil Voices

Hildegard von Bingen - *Hymns and Songs* (12th century) [25']

- viridissima virga
- frondens virga
- quam mirabilis
- virga ac diadema
- viriditas digiti dei

Ensemble Vocatrix

Sarah Beaty, mezzo-soprano
Lauren Michelle Davis, mezzo-soprano
Hilary Fraser-Thomson, soprano
Katina Mitchell, soprano & harp
Niccolo Seligmann, vielle
Argenta Walther, mezzo-soprano
Andrea Zomorodian, soprano

intermission

Pierluigi Billone - **FACE** (2016) [65'] West Coast premiere

Talea Ensemble

Barry J. Crawford, flute
Rane Moore, clarinet
Ryan Muncy, saxophone
Yaron Deutsch, electric guitar
Hannah Levinson, viola
Chris Gross, cello
Greg Chudzik, double bass
Stephen Gosling, piano
Jonathan Hepfer, percussion
Matthew Gold, percussion

Anna Clare Hauf, soprano
Alex Lipowski, ad hoc musician
David Adamcyk, electronics
James Baker, conductor

FACE was commissioned by Wien Modern and Philharmonie Luxembourg for ensemble PHACE

PROGRAM NOTES by Paul Griffiths

Fossil Voices

Pierluigi Billone, in his note below, uses the term a different way, but it works just as well to hint at what is happening this evening. Great traverses are being made through time, but, in a way, in opposite directions. The voices of Hildegard von Bingen's chants come to us from almost a millennium ago, having been fossilized in a great compendium of her works – visionary treatises, letters, liturgies, sacred songs with and without music, a mystery play – that was completed shortly after her death and then remained essentially closed until publication was begun in the twentieth century. The single Voice that expresses itself in the Billone work came into being only last year, and yet conveys an act of imagination going back much further than Hildegard, into an ancestral human past. In the one case, voices from long ago are, after an immense gap, singing again. In the other, a Voice that is very new reaches, across an immense gap, what was always there.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) - Ordo virtutum

O viridissima virga
O frondens virga
O quam mirabilis est
O virga ac diadema
O viriditas digiti dei

Hildegard spent almost her whole life in two religious houses, one after the other. As a younger child in a family of the lower nobility, she was enclosed from the age of fourteen with a group of nuns attached to the monastery of Disibodenberg, which had been founded by the Irish missionary Disibod in the seventh century and was situated about forty miles south-west of Mainz. In 1150, she took her fellow nuns around twenty miles northeast to found a convent of their own at Rupertsberg, near the town of Bingen, on the Rhine.

'O viridissima virga', for the Virgin Mary, is in the mode having G as final, though with an extension to the normal range. Such a chant could have been expected to unfold within an octave, from the D below the final to the D above. Hildegard keeps to this range most of the time, but goes higher now and then, especially on the word 'apparuerunt' (appeared).

The antiphon 'O frondens virga' again salutes the Virgin as 'virga' (branch), not just to make a pun, one would guess, but to embed her in the natural world. This time the range is more conservative, from the D final to the D an octave higher, with some lower dips in the later phases. That does not make the chant any the less haunting. Also an antiphon, 'O quam mirabilis est', in praise of the Creator, is in the mode on C, with a secondary station a fifth above and a range up to the octave. There are glorious moments on the words 'omnia' (all) and 'mirabilis' (wonderous, second time round) featuring a leap to this high point from the fourth below. Music is repeated from phrase to phrase, with some alteration.

Once more addressing the Virgin Mary, and again using botanical imagery, 'O virga ac diadema' is a sequence, a chant sung at mass between epistle and gospel. It is in the mode on A, with again a secondary resting place a fifth above and extensions higher, in this case to the A an octave above the final. The placing of these high notes – for example, on 'aer' (air) or 'Deus' (God) – might suggest a deliberate rhetorical effect, though it is hard to be sure, partly because in each pair of verses the music is more or less repeated. In any event, this sequence, incomplete in the sources, seems to have been one its composer particularly cherished. Just over half a century after her death, a witness recorded under oath that Hildegard was largely bedridden in her old age, but that "at the Holy Spirit's touch, she would then walk about the cloister and sing the sequence that begins, 'O virga ac diadema.'" Musically and poetically, Hildegard seems to be expressing a powerful devotion to Mary, even to the extent, unorthodox theologically, of hailing her as 'Salvatric' (woman savior).

When Hildegard wrote these chants is unknown, but presumably 'O viriditas digiti Dei', honoring St. Disibod, comes from her time at the settlement he established. It is a responsory, sung, that is, in dialogue, and is much more melismatic than the chants heard hitherto. Most unusual is the use of B as final (roughly speaking, the tonic) and the range of an octave and a fifth, the spectacular high notes appearing not, as one might expect, where there is mention of mountains but earlier.

Pierluigi Billone (b. 1960) - FACE

what is is what is
what disturbs is what is
what was is what is
what is is what is

Billone composed this extraordinary hour-long piece for twelve musicians last year, for the Austrian ensemble PHACE. The slow glides of the sax are like arms reaching out in a gesture of embrace, except that this is a behemoth. No fear, though. Just the size of the thing.

A Sumerian priestess has been wrested from five thousand years ago. No. This is deep time, and the Chalcolithic is still now. Archaeology remains alive in the human body.

The human body. Hollow percussion instruments as vocal cavities. Rhythms of walking.

To stand on the shore of the sea of time. The sea is made of myriads of small black and white objects, whispering in on each wave.

Above and beyond the sea, perhaps, a sky of bells.

The outside brought inside, so that there is no outside. Nowhere else.

Voice leaving voicer. With a will of its own.

The program note, breaking down, is replaced by the voice of the composer:

"Face" has a double meaning: "light/star" in Old Italian, and its typical English meaning. The expressions "Voice and ensemble" and "Voice" need to be clarified. The Voice – in a general sense – appears in all parts in different ways and according to a particular hierarchy. It involves a main vocal part (the female voice) with two vocal satellites (flute, special performer).

The solo voice has a rich, free and visionary part, with traces and accents of a pseudo-ancient-Greek-tragic voice, a wide spectrum of spoken and sung moments, only inner vibrations, or instrument-like vibrations. The voice reaches its central moment of development by using only "vocal acts": actions and gestures consisting of elemental body/voice acts of presence, like "belly-impulses," "throat violent noises and vibrations," and so on.

The special ad hoc performer has a ritual and mysterious function as "mediator," performing unconventional instrumental/vocal actions that mark and accompany the solo voice with introductions, punctuations, commentaries, and so on, until the moment when this "mediator" takes on the musical role of the solo voice.

The flutist plays mainly a real vocal part (hidden and filtered by the flute), completely depending on the solo voice part.

The whole ensemble sometimes turns into a kind of speaking/singing consort. In some particular contexts there appears a kind of "fossil voice": vocal fragments on tape having a special role (quotations from John Cage, Helmut Lachenmann, Luigi Nono, Giacinto Scelsi, Karlheinz Stockhausen.).

"Voice" means here a real constellation open in all directions and senses. It appears everywhere and in any way, and its logic of appearance remains deliberately enigmatic and unclear. The usual and traditional orientation, with its typical expressive/psychological or mechanical/instrumental point of view, here has no place. The body sounds and vibrates.

Some vibrations have a surface (the word). That is also the reason why there is no real text, and when a vocal action has a spoken articulation, its meaning remains completely hidden, again deliberately. The vocal actions occur here first as body gestures, as autonomous acts that only afterwards lead to the word and to language. The "clearance" lies here before the word, and independent from the word. The traditional hierarchy has been turned back.

The body eventually chews, devours, drinks, spits, vomits or builds the word anew. The body leaves the voice coming out or hiding, always starting from its emptiness and remaining always centered on its emptiness. The voice now needs this independence and free detachment from language. Why? Because there is something more important and urgent, now, than to set a text or write an opera.

Program notes © Paul Griffiths. Paul Griffiths is an acclaimed writer on contemporary and classical music whose books include *A Concise History of Western Music* and *The Penguin Companion to Classical Music*. He is also known as a librettist (Elliott Carter's *What Next?*) and novelist. In 2002, Griffiths was honored by the French government as a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

TEXTS

From Hildegard von Bingen's Hymns and Songs

O viridissima virga

1. O viridissima virga,
ave, que in ventoso flabro sciscitationis
sanctorum prodisti.

2. Cum venit tempus quod tu floruisti in ramis tuis,
ave, ave fuit tibi, quia calor solis in te sudavit
sicut odor balsami.

3. Nam in te floruit
pulcher flos qui odorem dedit
omnibus aromatibus que arida erant.

4. Et illa apparuerunt omnia in viriditate plena.

5. Unde celi dederunt rorem super gramen
et omnis terra leta facta est,
quoniam viscera ipsius frumentum
protulerunt et quoniam volucres celi nidos
in ipsa habuerunt.

6. Deinde facta est esca hominibus
et gaudium magnum epulantium.
Unde, o suavis Virgo, in te non deficit ullum gaudium.

7. Hec omnia Eva contempsit.

8. Nunc autem laus sit Altissimo.

1. O branch of freshest green,
O hail! Within the windy gusts of saints
upon a quest you swayed and sprouted forth.

2. When it was time, you blossomed in your boughs—
"Hail, hail!" you heard, for in you seeped the sunlight's
warmth like balsam's sweet perfume.

3. For in you bloomed
so beautiful a flow'r, whose fragrance wakened
all the spices from their dried-out stupor.

4. They all appeared in full viridity.

5. Then rained the heavens dew upon the grass
and all the earth was cheered,
for from her womb she brought forth fruit
and for the birds up in the sky
have nests in her.

6. Then was prepared that food for humankind,
the greatest joy of feasts!
O Virgin sweet, in you can ne'er fail any joy.

7. All this Eve chose to scorn.

8. But now, let praise ring forth unto the Highest!

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 porrigere
ad erigendum nos.

O blooming branch,
you stand upright in your nobility,
as breaks the dawn on high:
Rejoice now and be glad,
and deign to free us, frail and weakened,
from the wicked habits of our age;
stretch forth your hand
to lift us up aright.

O quam mirabilis est

O quam mirabilis est
prescientia divini pectoris
que prescivit omnem creaturam.
Nam cum Deus inspexit faciem hominis
quem formavit,
omnia opera sua in eadem forma
hominis integra aspexit.
O quam mirabilis est inspiratio
que hominem sic suscitavit.

How wonderous it is,
that the foreknowing heart divine
has first known everything created!
For when God looked upon the human face
that he had formed,
he gazed upon his ev'ry work and deed,
reflected whole within that human form.
How wondrous is that breath
that roused humanity to life!

O virga ac diadema

1a. O virga ac diadema purpure regis
que es in clausura tua sicut lorica:

1b. Tu frondens floruisti in alia vicissitudine
quam Adam omne genus humanum produceret.

2a. Ave, ave, de tuo ventre alia vita processit
qua Adam filios suos denudaverat.

2b. O flos, tu non germinasti de rore
nec de guttis pluvie
nec aer desuper te volavit sed divina
claritas in nobilissima virga te produxit.

3a. O virga, floriditatem tuam Deus in prima die
creature sue previderat.

3b. Et te Verbo suo auream materiam,
o laudabilis Virgo, fecit.

4a. O quam magnum est in viribus suis latus viri,
de quo Deus formam mulieris produxit,
quam fecit speculum
omnis ornamenti sui et amplexionem
omnis creature sue.

4b. Inde concinunt celestia organa et miratur
omnis terra, o laudabilis Maria,
quia Deus te valde amavit.

5a. O quam valde plangendum et lugendum
est quod tristicia in crimine
per consilium serpentis in mulierem fluxit.

5b. Nam ipsa mulier, quam Deus matrem omnium
posuit, viscera sua
cum vulneribus ignorantie decerpsit, et plenum dolorem
generi suo protulit.

6a. Sed, o aurora, de ventre tuo novus sol processit,
qui omnia crimina Eve abstersit et maiorem
benedictionem per te protulit
quam Eva hominibus nocuisset.

6b. Unde, o Salvatrix, que novum lumen humano generi
protulisti: collige membra Filii tui
ad celestem armoniam.

1a. O branch and diadem in royal purple clad,
who like a shield stand in your cloister strong.

1b. You burst forth blooming but with buds quite different
than Adam's progeny—th' entire human race.

2a. Hail, o hail! For from your womb came forth another life,
that had been stripped by Adam from his sons.

2b. O bloom, you did not spring from dew
nor from the drops of rain,
nor has the windy air flown over you; but radiance divine
has brought you forth upon that noblest bough.

3a. O branch, your blossoming God had foreseen
within the first day of his own creation.

3b. And by his Word he made of you a golden matrix,
O Virgin, worthy of our praise.

4a. O, how great in power is that side of man,
from which God brought the form of woman forth,
a mirror made
of all his ornament, and an embrace
of all his own creation.

4b. The heavens' symphony resounds, in wonder stands
all earth, O Mary, worthy of our praise,
for God has loved you more than all.

5a. O cry and weep! How deep the woe!
What sorrow seeped with guilt
in womanhood because the serpent hissed his wicked plan!

5b. That woman, whom God made to be the mother of the
world, had pricked her womb
with wounds of ignorance—the full inheritance of grief
she offered to her offspring.

6a. But from your womb, O dawn, has come the sun anew;
the guilt of Eve he's washed away
and through you offered humankind a blessing
even greater than the harm that Eve bestowed.

6b. O Lady Savior, who has offered to the human race
a new and brighter light: together join the members of your Son
into the heavens' harmony.

O viriditas digiti Dei

O viriditas digiti Dei
in qua Deus constituit plantationem,
que in excelso resplendet
ut statuta columna
tu gloriosa
in preparatione Dei.

Et o altitudo montis,
que numquam dissipaberis
in discretione Dei,
tu tamen stas a longe
ut exul,
sed non est in potestate armati,
qui te rapiat.

Tu gloriosa
in preparatione Dei.

Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto

Tu gloriosa
in preparatione Dei.

O Life-green finger of God,
in you God has placed a garden.
You reflect heaven's eminent radiance
like a raised pillar.
You are glorious
as you perform God's deeds.

O sublime mountains,
which can never be made low
by the discretion of God.
Yet still you stand at a distance,
as if in exile,
But there is no armed power
which can tear you away.

You are glorious
as you perform God's deeds.

Glory to the One, the Body, and to the Holy Spirit.

Glorious you are,
as you perform God's deeds.

'Fossil Voices' in Pierluigi Billone's FACE (texts from the recorded fragments)

Helmut Lachenmann

*Die Musik ist etwas....hö....als.....hö....
...als ich hab.....
Machen wir ein bisschen leichter...
Ich hab immer so ein bisschen schlampig.....-teil die Begriffe..
Nochmal die ..hö...
Die musikal-...ich muss eine Musik...uns zwingt
In unsern eigenen Ideen von Musik...*

*The music is something....hö....as....hö..
When I.....let's do it easier...
I always was so sloppy..... the concepts ..
Once again....the...hö..
The musical.....I must do a music...us forces
In our own Ideas of music*

Giacinto Scelsi

*Le son a un cœur, étant
sphérique, il a un centre.
C'est le centre du cœur.*

*The sound has a heart,
Being spherical, it has a centre.
It is the centre of the heart.*

John Cage

When I hear what we call music

*It seems to me that someone is talking, and talking about
his feelings, or about his ideas of relationships.
but when I hear traffic, the sound of traffic,
here at the 6th Avenue for instance,
I don't have the feeling that anyone is talking.
I have the feeling that Sound is acting.
And I love the activity of sound.
What it does is it gets louder and quieter, and it gets higher and lower,
and it gets longer and shorter
It does all those things which have...*

Karlheinz Stockhausen

*Whenever we hear sounds...
we arechanged.
We are no longer the same.*

Luigi Nono

*Come è possibile percepire, veramente,
le varie qualità di suono ?
Per questo è fondamentale per me parlare
della qualità, non tanto della sostanza del
suono....*

*How is it possible to perceive, really, the
different qualities of sound ?
Therefore it is essential for me to speak about
about the quality, and not of the substance
of the sound...*

*I am completely satisfied with it.
I don't need sound to talk to me.*

BIOGRAPHIES

Born in 1960 in Italy, **Pierluigi Billone** lives in Vienna. He studied composition with Salvatore Sciarrino and Helmut Lachenmann.

Billone's music has been performed by relevant interpreters in festivals such as Wien Modern, Festival d'Automne Paris, Donaueschinger Musiktagen, Wittener Tagen für neue Kammermusik, Eclat-Stuttgart, Ultraschall-Berlin, Musica Viva München, TFNM Zürich, Ars Musica Bruxelles, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, World Music Days Wrocław, Biennale Zagreb, Boston, New York, Monday Evening Concerts in Los Angeles, Bendigo Festival Sidney. His music has been regularly broadcast from the most important radios (BBC, WDR, SDR, BRD, NDR, ORF, DRS, RCE, RF, NR) in and beyond Europe. His works received international awards such as the Kompositionspreis der Stadt Stuttgart (Stuttgart 1993), the Busoni-Kompositionspreis (Academy of Arts Berlin 1996) the Wiener Internationaler Kompositionspreis (Vienna 2004), the Ernst-Krenek-Preis (Vienna 2006), and the Kompositionspreis der Ernst-von-Siemens-Musikstiftung (Munich 2010).

From 2006 to 2008 Pierluigi Billone has been guest professor for composition at the Music University Graz, in 2009 at the Music University of Frankfurt, and from 2010 until 2012 at the Music University Graz. He is regularly invited as teacher and lecturer in composition courses such as: IEMA-Ensemble Modern Akademie 2008, Harvard University 2010, Columbia University NY 2010, MCME International Academy Russland 2011, Ferienkurse Darmstadt 2010, 2012, 2014, Impulse Akademie Graz 2011, 2013, 2015, Tzllil Meducan Israel 2011, 2014, 2015, MCIC Madrid 2015, 2016, Boston University 2015, New York University 2015, Composiit-Rieti 2015, 2016.

The works of Pierluigi Billone appear on the Kairos, Stradivarius, Col-Legno, Durian, EMSA and Ein_Klang labels.

Mezzo-soprano **Anna Clare Hauf** was born in London and grew up in Vienna. Beginning in 1997, she studied singing at the Vienna University of Music and Performing Arts. In her training with professors Rotraud Hansmann and Charles Spencer she focused mainly on lieder. She has a special penchant for contemporary music, both in an operatic context and in concert performances. Her numerous collaborations in this field include productions by Neue Oper Wien, most recently Péter Eötvös's "Paradise reloaded (Lilith)", and by Klangforum Wien, e.g. Enno Poppe's "IQ" at the Schwetzingen SWR Festival 2011. Anna Hauf has also appeared at the Wien Modern Festival, e.g. in "Das Kind der Seehundfrau", and in the 2014 performance of Bernhard Gander's sitcom opera "Das Leben am Rande der Milchstraße". Ensemble Federspiel's new adaptation of Ernst Krenek's opera "Jonny spielt auf" also premiered in 2014, featuring Anna Hauf as a soloist. And in "(K)eine Alpensage", a story with musical elements by Christof Dienz and Ela Baumann, commissioned by the Vienna Jeunesse, Hauf took on the singing part, the narrator. In concert performances Anna Clare Hauf has appeared as a soloist with Klangforum Wien, Niederösterreichische Tonkünstler, Camerata Salzburg, the ensemble PHACE, and the recorder collective Plenum. She has appeared in premieres of works by Christian Muthspiel, Otto M. Zykan, Pierluigi Billone, Bernhard Lang and Lothar Voigtländer. In 2009 she also embarked on a collaboration with the Vienna Art Orchestra. As a singing actress and performer Anna Hauf appears regularly at the Wiener Kabinetttheater, e.g. in works by Salvatore Sciarrino, Mauricio Kagel or Hugo Ball. Her past performances as a lieder singer included works by Gustav Mahler, Richard Wagner, Ernst Krenek, as well as contemporary composers, e.g. at the Konzerthaus in Vienna and the Ruhrtriennale Festival.

James Baker is Principal Conductor of the Talea Ensemble, with whom he has led concerts across North America and Europe at festivals including Monday Evening Concerts, the U.S. Library of Congress, Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt, Wien Modern, and the TRANSIT Festival. He is also Principal Percussionist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, Director of the Percussion Ensemble at the Mannes School of Music, Music Director and conductor of the Composers Conference at Wellesley College, and Guest Conductor of the Slee Sinfonietta at the Institute for 21st Century Music in Buffalo. He has collaborated with composers on hundreds of world and American premieres including John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Earl Brown, Charles Wuorinen, Mario Davidovsky, Hans Werner Henze, Roger Reynolds, Hans Abrahamsen, Milton Babbitt, Donald Martino, Elliott Carter, Stefano Gervasoni, David Felder, George Crumb, Beat Furrer, Olga Neuwirth, and Georges Aperghis. An active composer of electroacoustic music, Mr. Baker has won a Bessie award for composition for dance. He has written extensively for the theater and for various ensembles with electronics and has written a number of pieces for long time collaborator, choreographer Tere O'Connor. Recent commissions include the Opera Ballet de Lyon, BAM Next Wave, The Dublin Dance Festival, and the Abbey Theater in Dublin.

Vocatrix specializes in the repertoire of the medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen. Creatively arranging her great works in original, historically informed ways, the group prides itself on celebrating these ancient masterpieces with a youthful teamwork. The ensemble has performed the Ordo Virtutum in three different productions, enchanting audiences from Los Angeles to Berkeley, and has been featured in the Los Angeles Times. Recent performances include engagements at Automata, the Berkeley Festival, and St. John's Cathedral, Los Angeles.

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