







DAISY PRESS

YOU ARE THE FLOWER

Music from Hildegard von Bingen - Vol. 1

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6. Ave Maria O Auctrix Vitae (14:14)

Favus Distillans

Daisy Press - vocal, crystal bowl, shruti box
Arrangement by Daisy Press

This is one of the many substantial chants that Hildegard composed for St. Ursula (d.383), a Scottish virgin martyr whose biography straddles history and myth. Ursula, the teenage daughter of a British Christian king, eschews her familial and societal obligations by publicly proclaiming that she will NOT marry a man. She dedicates her virginity to Christ, and in this boldness magnetizes either 11 OR 11,000 fellow virgins around her - the discrepancy in number depends on a Latin typo. Since 11,000 is a far more impressive following, myth-makers double down on the larger number. Ursula, with her chaste entourage, embarks upon a European tour celebrating the fabulousness of virginity. On the way home, though, Ursula and her companions meet a brutal and bloody end when they are slaughtered by a gang of men with arrows and swords.

In *Favus Distillans*, Hildegard used garden imagery reminiscent of the Bible's "Song of Songs" to invoke the visceral, sensual atmosphere of these 11,000 virgins gathering around Ursula. The "dripping honeycomb" is Ursula herself, nestled in the deep center of the garden. She tastes "milk and honey" on her tongue, while her virgin friends orbit her like a swarm of bees.

This was the first Hildegard chant that I performed at Brooklyn's weird and wild nightclub, House of Yes. Sandwiched between burlesque and aerial acts, I sang this chant sitting on the stage, alone, playing the crystal bowl with my right hand and simultaneously squeezing the shruti box with my left. I wanted the recorded arrangement of this chant to reflect how it's played and performed live, including the improvisations at the beginning and end of the chant.



Favus distillans
Ursula virgo fuit,
que Agnum Dei
amplecti desideravit,
mel et lac
sub lingua eius.

*Quia pomiferum
hortum et
flores florum
in turba virginum
ad se collegit.*

Unde in nobilissima aurora
gaude, filia Sion.

*Quia pomiferum
hortum et
flores florum
in turba virginum
ad se collegit.*

Gloria Matri et Filiae
et Spiritui sancto.*

*Quia pomiferum
hortum et
flores florum
in turba virginum
ad se collegit.*

A dripping honeycomb
was Ursula, the virgin,
who longed to embrace
the Lamb of God
with honey and milk
under her tongue.

*In a garden
bursting with ripe fruit
amongst the blossoming of flowers
she collected a swarm
of virgins around herself.*

In this most noble sunrise
rejoice, Daughter of Zion.

*In a garden
bursting with ripe fruit
amongst the blossoming of flowers
she collected a swarm
of virgins around herself.*

Glory to the Mother
and to the Daughter
and to the Holy Spirit.*

*In a garden
bursting with ripe fruit
amongst the blossoming of flowers
she collected a swarm
of virgins around herself.*

*changes made to the original Latin text

Rubor Sanguinis

Daisy Press - lead and backing vocals

Nick Hallett - Wurlitzer piano

Arrangement by Nick Hallett and Daisy Press

Backing vocal arrangement by Dick Connette and Daisy Press

This chant, another for St. Ursula, opens like a short story by Stephen King. Copious amounts of blood, specifically the blood of the martyred Ursula and her companions, flows down from heaven, notably infused with divinity and purity. Addressing Ursula directly, Hildy hits us with another odd and specific image amidst all this blood - "You are the flower who survives the winter of the serpent's breath."

Nick Hallett, a long-term friend and collaborator, joined on this chant as co-arranger. He brilliantly harmonized the melodic shapes I made with a chord progression that brought about its rather gorgeous pop feel, complete with Wurlitzer. At some point early on, this arrangement with Nick evoked Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" to my ears and from that moment on I channeled Joni Mitchell channeling Hildy.

<p>O rubor sanguinis, qui de excelso illo fluxisti quod divinitas tetigit - tu flos es quem hyems de flatu serpentis numquam lesit.</p>	<p>Oh redness of this blood, that streams down from on high, infused with divinity - You are the flower who survives the winter of the serpent's breath.</p>
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Viridissima Virga

Daisy Press - vocal, Fender bass, Steinway swarmandal

Dick Connette - piano, harmonium

Arrangement by Dick Connette and Daisy Press

This chant goes deeper into the sights, sounds, smells, and sensual pleasures of the garden of Mary's fecundity. It is set syllabically rather than melismatically, so its undertaking requires constant attention to a rapidly moving text. Unlike the Ursula chants, this work does not require big melodic leaps or the spinning out of long lines; this is one of the more "easy riding" works that settles into a forward-moving storytelling groove once the text is mastered, and is one of Hildy's most iconic offerings to the Virgin.

Dick Connette - For the instrumental arrangement, I applied two different ratios of rhythmic augmentation to the opening notes of each strophe. One created some sort of *cantus firmus* expressed by the harmonium and Fender bass. The other expressed the augmented melody across 4 octaves on the piano. In addition, inspired by Daisy's Hindustani vocal approach, I turned the harp of a Steinway B into a swarmandal (a traditional Indian zither). Daisy improvised a plucking and strumming part, leaning over into the harp under the raised lid. It looked like she was working under the hood of an automobile.



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

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

Nam in te floruit
omnibus aromatibus
que arida erant.

Et illa apparuerunt omnia
in viriditate plena.

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.

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

Hec omnia Eva contempsit.

Nunc autem laus sit Altissimo.

Hail, Oh greenest branch,
blowing in the breezes
of the prayers of the saints.

When the time has come for you
to be in full bloom,
hail, hail to you,
and in the heat of the sun
your sweet perfume of balsam
wafts in the air.

The flower that grew inside of you
was so beautiful it reawakened
the aromas of spices
which had been dried out.

Now they diffuse and radiate
in their full freshness.

When the heavens
rained dew onto the grass,
all the earth rejoiced;
her womb brought forth fruit
and the birds of the sky
built their nests in her.

Then there was a harvest ready for
humankind, the most resplendent
feast and party in the spirit
of the deepest joy. Oh sweet Virgin,
not one thing is lacking
in your immaculate wholeness.

Eve chose to turn away
from all of this.

Now, we praise the Highest.



S
URSUL

Frondens Virga

Daisy Press - vocals

Arrangement by Jeff Cook and Daisy Press

This simple and succinct chant praises the nobility of a tree branch in full bloom. As in several of Hildy's Marian chants, the tree is a metaphor for Mary, both in her virginity and fecundity. And Hildy's *Viriditas*, otherwise known as "greenness" or "greening force" is further woven into this tree-themed play on words - *Virga* means "branch" whereas *Virgo* is "virgin."

Jeff Cook - I was inspired by Daisy's cleverly subtle amendment to the original *cantus firmus* with the addition of two instances of a flattened fifth. Under traditional contrapuntal writing constructs of the 12th century, this would have been viewed as heretical and in opposition to general *musica ficta* principles of the time. This purposeful alteration gives a sense of poetic character to the *cantus firmus* on first iteration, and an even more defiant cross relation on the second. I couldn't resist exaggerating this dissonance by placing it against a backdrop of a more traditional medieval choral approach. The monks of the time would surely have banished us for this kind of behavior.

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.

Oh blooming branch,
you stand in your nobility
while the sun rises;
be glad, and rejoice -
and, if it be your will,
please bend down to free us
from our mistakes and shameful habits:
may you stretch out your hand
to lift us up.





Spiritui Sancto Honor Sit

Daisy Press - vocal, whirly tubes, crystal bowls, Tibetan bowl

Arrangement by Daisy Press

In this chant Hildy pays deep honor to Saint Ursula by emphasizing and praising, through a repeated chorus, Ursula's aversion to marriage to a man. This is set against the backdrop of a nautical-themed story filled with miracles. In their "World Virginity Tour," Ursula and her 11,000 companions ALL board one ship which does not sink under the weight of their sheer number. The sea, in approval of their faith and fervor, helps them along by ushering them across an impossibly vast expanse in one day. Hildy adds a romantic and sensual touch to this voyage by describing the long flowing hair of these ladies which, in her imagination, blows and twists in the wind amidst these blessings.

In the musical arrangement of this chant, the crystal bowl in F (as a base) anchors the ancient and ethereal vibes of this story. To summon the more foreboding aspects of what is ahead for the ladies (their eventual slaughter), whirly tubes were multitracked and played along with this chant, as they sound unmistakably like a ghost choir. Other frequencies of bowls were brought in too, to "rub up" against the frequency of the F bowl and create a bit of seasickness. The complex tonality of the Tibetan bowl, which punctures the texture with ritual-like timing, drives home the uneasiness.



Spiritui sancto
honor sit, qui in mente
Ursule virginis
virginalem turbam
velut columbas collegit.
Unde ipsa patriam suam sicut
Abraham reliquit.

*Et etiam propter
amplexionem Agni
desponsationem viri sibi.*

Nam iste castissimus
et aureus exercitus
in virgineo crine mare transivit.
O quis umquam talia audivit?

*Et etiam propter
amplexionem Agni
desponsationem viri sibi.*

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui sancto.

*Et etiam propter
amplexionem Agni
desponsationem viri sibi.*

We honor the Holy Spirit,
who, in the psyche
of Ursula the virgin,
gathered together
a swarm of virgins, like doves.
Because of this she left her fatherland
following in the footsteps of Abraham.

*And also because
she embraced the Lamb,
she rejected marriage to a man.*

For this is the most self-possessed,
golden army who crossed the sea
with their hair blowing in the wind.
Truly, who has ever heard
a story this incredible?

*And also because
she embraced the Lamb,
she rejected marriage to a man.*

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

*And also because
she embraced the Lamb,
she rejected marriage to a man.*

Ave Maria O Auctrix Vitae

Daisy Press - vcoal, crystal bowl, shruti box

Paul Woodiel - hardingfele

Arrangement by Daisy Press

This chant is one of Hildy's most extravagant homages to the Virgin. It's also epic to sing - the melismas are above and beyond, and there is a large amount of text to get through. The chant is long with multiple repeats. As I have come to know Hildy in her many musical moods (not mode dependent), I'd label this one as "spinning out." The flavor of thinking is ecstatic, stimulated, riding on its own sparkling momentum, and requires a state of absolute calm as a performer.

In terms of content, this text lists many terrible things that Eve did, and all that Mary did to make it right. But, most importantly and repeatedly, this chant drives home the human power/practice of breath(ing) as a direct connection to a higher consciousness, and the truth and renewal that are possible within the conscious breath. The most fierce melisma is on the word "*inspiravit*," which alludes to both breathing and inspiration, and perhaps Hildy is challenging us to see how far we can go with our own breathing. If God can breathe all of this creation out, so can you.

The arrangement of this chant consisted of me playing my crystal bowl and shruti box, and we invited Paul Woodiel into the session to jam with me, which he did on hardingfele (a Norwegian fiddle, which has, in addition to the 4 strings of the classical violin, an additional 4 or 5 unplayed sympathically resonating strings). He immersed himself in the "consciousness" of the piece that I described above - the spun out melismas and ecstatic energy - and his voice was a truly welcome addition.



Ave Maria,
O auctrix vite,
reedificando salutem,
que mortem conturbasti
et serpentem contrivisti,
ad quem se Eva erexit
erecta cervice
cum sufflatu superbie.
Hunc conculcasti
dum de celo Filium Dei genuisti,

*quem inspiravit
Spiritus Dei.*

O dulcissima atque amantissima
mater, salve,
que natum tuum de celo
missum mundo edidisti,

*quem inspiravit
Spiritus Dei.*

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui sancto.

*quem inspiravit
Spiritus Dei.*

Hail Mary,
Oh authoress of life,
you restore us to wholeness.
You've stopped death in its tracks
and exterminated the snake
to whom Eve offered herself,
sticking her neck out
with overblown self-centeredness.
You crushed that serpent's head
when you gave birth
to the Son of God, from heaven,

*who was infused with
the breath of God.*

Oh sweet and most treasured
mother, we celebrate you
for giving birth to the One,
who, from heaven,
was bestowed upon the world,

*who was infused with
the breath of God.*

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

*who was infused with
the breath of God.*





You Are the Flower Daisy Press

Music from Hildegard von Bingen - Vol. 1

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To Dick Connette - You have put Volmar's duties and burdens to shame - thank you for every last molecule of curiosity, musical inspiration, logistical brilliance, emotional intelligence, and painstaking attention to detail so generously devoted to this project. Even Hildy can't understand how you pull this off.

To Jeff Cook - Thank you for your ears, so tuned in to all the finer frequencies, for your endless hours of expertise and patience, and for your most weird and wonderful sense of humor which made it all fun.

To Mom - Thank you for your love, generosity and for your Hildy-like communion with your own garden.

To Hildy - Thanks for your strange stable presence in my life - for holding a mirror and a path whenever I am brave enough to say "let's hang."

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