

The Women of Western Music

HILDEGARD to ELLA

**The Music and Lives of 18 Noteworthy
Composers, Teachers, and Performers**

By Anna Wentlent



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Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard von Bingen was born, lived, and died in the same region of what is now Germany. She was the youngest of ten children. At that time, it was customary for the tenth child born into a large family to be promised to the church. Hildegard's parents decided to give her over to the service of God when she reached an acceptable age.

When she was about 14, Hildegard was sent to join a nearby Benedictine monastery, where she began wearing a habit and pursuing a religious life. She was enclosed with a nun named Jutta, with whom she lived in a secluded one-room cell. Hildegard and Jutta communicated with the outside world through a single window. The two women spent their time making music, praying, reading the Bible, and answering letters from people asking for spiritual instruction. Hildegard also spent time studying academic subjects that interested her, such as natural history, biology, German folk medicine, the Latin language, cosmology (the study of the origins of the universe), and music. As a nun, she was educated far beyond the level of most young women in the Medieval era.

Hildegard and Jutta were both visionaries who saw visions and made prophecies about the future. They were often called upon for advice by popes, emperors, and other important figures. The two women's fame attracted other women to their enclosure, which eventually expanded into a convent of over 50 nuns. When Jutta died, Hildegard became their leader. Later in life, she founded another convent near Bingen. This community celebrated music, drama, and art. On feast days, all of the nuns dressed in long, flowing white robes and wore golden crowns.

Hildegard produced a large body of work during her lifetime, including three volumes of visionary theology that were read by church leaders across Europe and a natural history book that was used in early medical schools. As a composer, she wrote numerous musical settings of religious poetry, a musical drama called *Ordo Virtutum* (the first in history), and many short musical pieces to be used in religious services, such as antiphonies, responsorials, and hymns.

THINGS TO KNOW

Born: 1098

Died: 1179

Profession

Nun, mystic, and composer

Genre of Music

Medieval sacred music



Track 1

ON THE CD

Voices of Ascension singing "O pastor animarum" by Hildegard von Bingen

When she was in her late fifties, Hildegard began to travel around Europe. She used her fame to promote the Roman Catholic faith and preach pacifism (the belief that any violence, including war, is unjustifiable). She also spread her ideas about music, medicine,

Mendelssohn **matching**

Directions: Fill in the blanks using the terms in the following word bank. Every term will be used once.

clavichord	Berlin	piano
hammer dulcimer	charity concert	Romantic
tangent	Felix Mendelssohn	Wilhelm Hensel
plectrum	London	42
clavicytherium	musicales	400

1. _____ age at which Ms. Hensel died
2. _____ blade of metal used to strike the strings of a clavichord
3. _____ classical music era in which Ms. Hensel lived
4. _____ early keyboard instrument developed by the Italians
5. _____ English city in which Fanny's music was performed
6. _____ German city in which the Mendelssohn family lived
7. _____ instrument on which Ms. Hensel excelled
8. _____ Ms. Hensel's brother, a well-known composer
9. _____ Ms. Hensel's husband, a well-known painter
10. _____ quiet instrument often used at home in the Baroque era
11. _____ string instrument developed in the Middle East
12. _____ the site of Ms. Hensel's only public performance
13. _____ total number of compositions written by Ms. Hensel
14. _____ used to pluck the strings of some keyboard instruments
15. _____ weekly events held at the Mendelssohn household