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~ Hildegard von Bingen, the Late, Great, One and Only? ~
Making the Case against Modern Hildegard Scholarship:
Questioning Originality in Hildegard von Bingen and Her Musical Output

A Research Proposal Presented

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Title: Hildegard von Bingen, the Late, Great, One and Only? Making the Case against Modern Hildegard Scholarship: Questioning Originality in the Music of Hildegard von Bingen

Featured Pieces:

The Office of Lauds for St. Ursula by Hildegard von Bingen

The Office of Lauds for St. Magnus by Hermannus Contractus (Hermann of Reichenau)

Select Bibliography:

Bain, Jennifer. "Hildegard, Hermannus, and Late Chant Style." *Journal of Music Theory* 52.1 (2008): 123-149.

Crocker, Richard. "Hermann's Major Sixth." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 25.1 (1972): 19-37.

Hermannus Contractus, David Hiley, and Walter Berschin. *Historia Sancti Magni: Jubiläumsausgabe*. Lions Bay: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2013.

Hermannus Contractus, and Leonard Ellinwood. *Musica Hermann Contracti, Presented from an Unedited Source and Collated with the Vienna Ms. No. 51 and the Editions of Gerbert and Brambach, with Parallel English Translation. Expanded from a Thesis Presented for the*

Hiley, David. "The Historia Sancti Magni by Hermannus Contractus (1013-1054)." *Collected Work: Music in medieval Europe: Studies in honour of Bryan Gillingham*. Pages: 367-391. (AN: 2007-03013). (2007): 367-392

Pfau, Marianne Richert. *Hildegard von Bingen: Der Klang Des Himmels*. Köln: Böhlau, 2005. Print. Europäische Komponistinnen Bd. 1.

Abstract: The prestigious and exceptional characterization of Hildegard von Bingen, promoted for at least the past century, and popularized within the past few decades, has become the standard expectation in most textbooks and curriculums on Medieval Music. Some questions arise against many historians' claims however. While there might be many surviving chants of Hildegard, possibly numbering more than any other single contemporary individual, this claim seems to propose that there was no other individual writing significant amounts of innovative monophonic liturgical music during this time. However, evidence available to musicologists for the past fifty years would indicate otherwise. Music by such 12th century composers as Hermannus Contractus clearly shows evidence for an extremely prolific and progressive monophonic compositional style at least fifty years before Hildegard von Bingen. This evidence suggests that the musically historical position that historians have given Hildegard von Bingen is perhaps over inflated and ultimately incorrect, neglecting the novel innovations of composers a generation before her time.

Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Abbess of Rupertsberg and Sybil of the Rhine was an educated woman of noble birth. From the early stages of her life, she lived as an exception to most of the standards of womanly life in European society during the Late Middle Ages. Her exact date of birth is uncertain, but it is clear and commonly accepted that she was born around 1098. Sickly from birth, she was a vision seer, possibly due to what scholars think were epileptic seizures. Perhaps due to these mystical visions, or as a method of political positioning (as was common in the period), Hildegard's parents gave her at a young age to the church. By 1136, she had worked her way into a position of popularity and power in the convent at Disibodenberg, and was unanimously elected magistra of the community by her sister nuns. Subsequently, against the wishes of her supervising Abbot, Hildegard moved the community of nuns from Disibodenberg to Rupertsberg, seeking more independence from the Church's patriarchy.

She became a writer, theologian, medic, philosopher, mystic, visionary, independent abbess, and composer, erecting for herself a unique legacy in the humanities and sciences that still stands today. She managed to position herself above the heavily imposed and long engrained patriarchal system of Medieval Europe, standing as an independent, educated, empowered woman of great import. Truly she was an exceptional thinker in all she did and accomplished, but are these accomplishments without precedence or outside influence or inspiration? Are they, as they have been labeled for many years, completely unique and absolutely original, particularly in the field of music?

True, indeed, as far as we know from document records available to us now, she was the first composer to regularly identify herself on her own music. She is credited with the creation of one of the first morality plays, *Ordo virtutum*. Her smaller pieces are just as exceptional in their

musical content as well. For example, *Ave generosa*, hymn to the Virgin, c. 1150, is highly imaginative musically and sensual poetically, particularly given its apparent liturgical use. The music has long been considered characteristically unusual in comparison to much of the repertoire that precedes it and is contemporary to it. As compared to most of the chant repertoire of the Middle Ages, beginning in 800 CE and extending to her day, there are many stark differences in this piece as compared to other chants. First, this piece has a modified strophic form, allowing it to create more text painting in relation to each changing verse. Second, the ambitus of this hymn to the virgin is expansive, with a range of a fourteenth. Last, it is highly melismatic and virtuosic, at least equal to or even more so than some of the most melismatic Alleluia chants in the repertoire.

This exceptional characterization of Hildegard, promoted for at least the past century, and popularized within the past few decades, has become the standard expectation in most textbooks and curriculums on Medieval Music. For example, the widely popular textbook, *A History of Western Music*, first written by Donald Grout and then edited and expanded upon by others, gives Hildegard a meaningful place in the canon of Western Music in its most recent editions. Grout writes that Hildegard stands out in many respects from the music written during the 11th and 12th centuries. First, he notes that “there are more surviving chants by Hildegard than any other composer from the entire Middle Ages.”¹ Second, he demarcates her melodies, claiming that there is “great individuality in Hildegard’s melodies.... Many exceed the range of an octave by a fourth or fifth.” He goes on, also saying that “[Hildegard] repeatedly uses a small repertoire of melodic figures in constant variation. Some patterns... [however] are extraordinary, such as

¹ Grout, Donald Jay. J. Peter Burkholder, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music, 7th Ed.* New York: W. W. Norton, 2005. 66

successive leaps and other patterns that quickly span an octave or more.”² The accompanying anthology of music from Antiquity through the Renaissance, contains an example from Hildegard von Bingen. Grout’s positioning and characterizing of Hildegard and her music has become a common phenomenon in most modern survey textbooks of Medieval Music.

Some questions arise against Grout’s and other’s claims however. While yes, there might be many surviving chants of Hildegard, possibly numbering more than any other single individual, this claim seems to propose that there was no other individual writing significant amounts of monophonic liturgical music during this time. However, evidence available to musicologists for at least the past fifty years would indicate otherwise. When one looks at older textbooks surveying Medieval Music, one will find a disparity of music from Hildegard von Bingen. What then was there instead?

Richard Hoppin, for example, in his survey book, *Medieval Music*, makes no mention of Hildegard.³ David Wilson, in his book *Music of the Middle Ages: Style and Structure*, also makes no reference to the Sybil of the Rhine.⁴ Willi Apel, in his seminal book on chant during the middle ages, makes no reference to Hildegard, despite her apparent and significant contribution to the repertoire.⁵ Why is it that all these sources of information on music from the Middle Ages, used in curriculums at Universities for decades, make no mention of Hildegard even though sources of her music, writings, and thoughts were available at the time of their respective publications (1978, 1990, and 1958)? If one were to check other available survey sources on Medieval Music from this time period, one would find this trend continues. Following this period and beginning in the mid 1990’s, however, Hildegard suddenly and rather unceremoniously

² Ibid.

³ Hoppin, Richard H. *Medieval Music*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978. Print.

⁴ Wilson, David Fenwick. *Music of the Middle Ages: Style and Structure*. New York: Schirmer, 1990. Print.

⁵ Apel, Willi. *Gregorian Chant*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1958. Print.

appears in modern textbooks on the subject, and equally as suddenly and unceremoniously do all those mentioned before disappear. Why? Where did they go?

It is interesting to note that most of these books were published before the recent resurgence of Hildegard studies in the 1990's. Prior to the 90's most studies and mentions of Hildegard were confined outside the field of music. Little credence was given to her as a composer or musician. It was in the 1990's that studies in Hildegard's music and new recordings of her music in response to these studies began to surface and make her a more prominent and seriously considered figure in the history of Western Music. Studies by musicologists and Hildegard specialists such as Marianne Richert Pfau (editor of modern editions of Hildegard's complete musical works and author of numerous studies on the Abbess), Jennifer Bain (musicologist and Hildegard researcher), Sheila Mary Forrester, and others were the first to bring Hildegard's music fully into academic and popular consideration. The reader is asked to refer to the appended bibliography. Notice that all sources pulled on Hildegard originate in the 1990's and not before. It is difficult to find much extensive scholarly musical research on Hildegard before this time.

Beginning in the 1990's and escalating into the early 21st century, the popularity of Hildegard as a subject for scholarly musical research rose and her inclusion in academic texts for use in classrooms increased equally. With this rise in popularity came increased fame, and with increased fame came increased status in the classical canon. At this point, claims about Hildegard's exclusive rights to the originality of her music began to proliferate in textbooks and classrooms, resulting in claims such as those mentioned by Grout and his successive editors above. Are these claims true, however? If one would open any survey textbook of Medieval Music written before 1990, one might find evidence to the contrary.

There are contemporaries to Hildegard that are also expanding the limits of the chant repertoire, perhaps making it arguable that Hildegard's music is not as unprecedented in style and scope as many have come to believe, particularly considering that a great number of these contemporaries were composing music before Hildegard was even born. Hermann of Reichenau (1013 - 1054), here also known by his other title, Hermannus Contractus, was one such contemporary of Hildegard. While living slightly before her time, his work could have easily influenced the Abbess, both figures having been Benedictine Monastics, only living approximately 350 kilometers apart between Reichenau and Rupertsberg. Given their shared religious practices and close proximity, it is easy to perhaps believe that the works of Hermannus could have disseminated the 350 kilometers in the near fifty years between his death and Hildegard's induction into the Benedictine Order.

Hermannus was similar to Hildegard in many ways. First, he was born into a family of noble heritage and educated from a young age.⁶ Second, like Hildegard, if we assume her visions were caused by some degree of epilepsy, Hermannus was born with numerous ailments, resulting in his life-long physical handicaps.⁷ Third, due to these handicaps, he was placed into the care of monastics due to his parent's inability to care for him themselves.⁸ As a result, he grew up in the church under the care of monastics, developing his knowledge and a keen interest in the humanities, specifically the arts of the quadrivium. Due to his keen intellect and natural interest in learning, reinforced by the very Order to which he belonged, he became and is still considered today a scholar of great renown, further paralleling his life to Hildegard's. He wrote treatises on

⁶ Hermannus, and Leonard Ellinwood. *Musica Hermanni Contracti, Presented from an Unedited Source and Collated with the Vienna Ms. No. 51 and the Editions of Gerbert and Brambach, with Parallel English Translation. Expanded from a Thesis Presented for the Degree of Master of Music.* Rochester: Eastman School of Music, U of Rochester, 1936. 7

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music.⁹ He was a historian, chronicling the history of the world, as he saw it, from the birth of Christ to his present day. He was highly literate, apparently able to read Arabic, Greek, and Latin and he wrote numerous religious poems.¹⁰ Clearly, his prolific output and intellect are not dissimilar to that of Hildegard's five decades later.

Most important to the discussion at hand, however, is Hermannus' musical output. Not only was Hermannus a theorist, having written a treatise on chant and modal theory, but a composer as well, having a number of works to his name – some of certain origin and some speculative. Of those that we can be most certain of are the chants for the Offices of St. Afra, St. Wolfgang, and St. Magnus.

For the Office of St. Magnus, Hermannus Contractus composed over 30 pieces.¹¹ Thus, if he wrote at least 30 chants for one of his three *existent* offices, is it then possible to conclude that Hermannus could have equaled, if not surpassed Hildegard in compositional output, almost a century before her compositional height? Scholars are aware of and have made modern editions of three of Hermann's Offices, but we can at least speculate that there were even more. In Hiley's article about his work on the recent edition of Hermann's Office to St. Magnus he translates a quotation from one of Hermann's disciples, Berthold, who tells of the *historiae* that his "reverenced" master composed. The quotation and Hiley's translation are thus:

Cantus item historiales plenaries, utpote quo musicus peritior non erat, de sancto Georgio, sanctis Gordiano et Epimacho, sancto Afra martyre, sancto Magno confessore,

⁹ Ibid. 8

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hermannus Contractus, David Hiley, and Walter Berschin. *Historia Sancti Magni: Jubiläumsausgabe*. Lions Bay: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2013.

et de sancto Wolfgango episopo mira suavitate et elegantia euphonicos, praeter alia huiusmodi perplura, neumatizavit et composuit. (268)

“Being a *musicus* more expert than anyone else, he set to music and composed complete cycles of chants for *historiae*, for St. George, St. Gordianus and Epimachus, St. Afra the Martyr, St Magnus the Confessor and St Wolfgang the Bishop, harmonious in their wonderful sweetness and elegance, with very many others of this kind.”¹²

This quotation from a primary and contemporary source clearly indicates the existence of other Offices that are not yet known to us through any manuscripts. Again, given Hermann’s compositional output for one Office in a collection of three to possibly six, it is possible to assume that the number of compositions he wrote in his lifetime outweigh those of Hildegard’s. Furthermore, the number of compositions known to us today and available in modern editions could even outweigh those available compositions of Hildegard von Bingen.

The claims of modern textbooks and scholars in regards to Hildegard’s unprecedented compositional output become questionable in light of these facts. However, the question remains as to the originality of the music of Hildegard itself.

To begin addressing these claims, a juxtaposition to the popular *Ave Generosa* by Hildegard is offered, a particular piece of more renown and popularity, typically and justifiably attributed to Hermannus: the antiphon *Alma redemptoris mater*. In a time before the music of Hildegard of Bingen, we are still hearing a great expansion in monophonic liturgical chant with this piece. This chant does not have quite the same melodic character as a typical Office antiphon would have. It possesses a far greater ambitus (a major tenth); it is neumatic with an extended

¹² Hiley, David. “The Historia Sancti Magni by Hermannus Contractus (1013–1054).” *Collected Work: Music in medieval Europe: Studies in honour of Bryan Gillingham*. Pages: 367-391. (AN: 2007-03013). (2007): 367, citing Georg Heinrich Pertz, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae historica, scriptores, annals et chronica aevi salici* (1844), vol. 5, pp. 268

melisma rather than mostly syllabic; it contains more leaps and less conjunct motion; it is in a mode similar to our modern major scale with the consistent use of the altered B-flat, not wholly identifiable with any of the standard eight modes common to the day; it is far longer in duration than is typical; there is no corresponding psalm or recitation as would normally be present; and the text is written contemporaneously with the music whereas an antiphon text would normally be derived from Biblical verse, particularly the Psalms. Last and still similar to *Ave generosa*, this chant is a honorific piece to the Virgin Mary, a new devotional practice in vogue during this time in the Late Middle Ages.

Given this single and very simple comparison with one of Hermannus Contractus's most well-known and popular pieces, it seems reasonable to question the argument that the music of Hildegard of Bingen was truly "novel" for her time.

Recent Hildegard and Hermannus researchers have even begun to recognize this fact within the past five to eight years, beginning with such publications as Pfau's co-authored book, *Hildegard von Bingen: Der Klang Des Himmels* (2005), and Jennifer Bain's article, "Hildegard, Hermannus, and Late Chant Style," in the *Journal of Music Theory* (2008). While the first of these sources is only available in German and the book only addresses the matter of Hildegard's possible influences in a single chapter, it has clearly laid a foundation for further Hildegard research on the topic of her influences. In her article, Bain addresses the overinflated claims to Hildegard's originality when she writes:

"A contextualization of Hildegard's musical output makes it clear that she was not as isolated musically... as generally thought, but rather immersed in the musical traditions of her day. A historiographical overview reveals that nineteenth-century scholars were

already aware of these similarities, in contrast to scholarship of the last thirty years, which has focused on Hildegard's originality.”¹³

Bain recognizes the problematic nature of musicological scholarship of the 11th and 12th centuries poignantly. Not only were nineteenth-century scholars aware of these similarities, but scholars up until the 1990's were aware and publishing texts teaching the music and names of these composers, making claims to their importance in the Western Musical Canon.

As early as 1879, chant scholar and author of the monumental *Geschichte der Kirchenmusik*, Raimund Schlecht, made remarks regarding Hildegard's contemporary influence. In 1879 he reported in his text on the life and work of Hildegard (printed in German) that her musical expression "was influenced by the spirit of her time; . . . her melodies agree in all ways with the practice of the twelfth century"¹⁴

Almost equally as early, Dom Joseph Pothier (of Solesmes fame) also examined Hildegard's music. Having visited Wiesbaden in 1878 to transcribe all of her melodies from the Riesenkodez, he wrote a series of articles on her music in his *Revue du Chant Grégorien*. In particular, he noted that in Hildegard's melodies there is "more sentiment, more expression than in ordinary Gregorian melodies." He went on to attribute this stylistic difference in her melodies to a style found "everywhere in Germany, characteristic of the liturgical compositions of this epoch"¹⁵. He describes the figurations found in Hildegard's melodies as conforming to "other

¹³ Bain, Jennifer. "Hildegard, Hermannus, and Late Chant Style." *Journal of Music Theory* 52.1 (2008): 123–149. 123

¹⁴ Ibid. 124, citing Schlecht, Raimund. 1879. "Das Urtheil eines Sachverständigen über die Lieder." In *Das Leben und Wirken der heiligen HildegardL· nach den (Quellen dargestellt, by J. P. Schmelzeis, 454-59 and appendix. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung. 455*

¹⁵ Ibid. 125, citing and translating Pothier, Dom Joseph. 1898. "Répons en l'honneur de la T. S. Vierge: Composé par Sainte Hildegarde." *Revue du Chant Grégorien* 7/1: 6-10. 9

compositions of the same country appearing also in the 11th or 12th century,"¹⁶ particularly those of Hermannus Contractus.

Continuing, Johannes May, in his text *Die heilige Hildegard von Bingen, Aus dem Orden des heiligen Benedikt, 1098-1179*, published in 1911, also makes reference to the crippled monk from Reichenau when he describes Hildegard's responsory *O clarissima mater* "as a variation of *Salve regina*, which the monk Hermann the Lame from Reichenau had sung a hundred years earlier"¹⁷. Although claims that Hermannus Contractus composed *Salve regina* are speculative and debatable, his authorship of *Alma redemptoris mater* is less so, and it is clear, given his Offices to Saint Afra, Wolfgang, and Magnus, that Hildegard's music does share remarkable affinities with Hermann's musical style.

Relatively more recently, books surveying music from the Middle Ages, published between 1950 and 1990, also include mentions of this composer and his work, along with other contemporaries of similar status. Hoppin, in his previously mentioned textbook, while never mentioning Hildegard, does mention Hermannus as a composer in new and extended chant practices during the 11th and 12th centuries. He is specifically mentioned in relation to *Alma Redemptoris Mater* regarding the types of free melodies found in the Late Medieval Offices, particularly the Antiphons.¹⁸ In the accompanying music anthology, Hoppin also includes Hermannus's *Alma Redemptoris Mater*.¹⁹ David Wilson, in his previously mentioned text, does not mention Hermannus, but does list a number of other composers contemporary to Hermannus, including Hermanus's own teacher, Berno of Reichenau, as part of a list of theorists during the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, citing and translating May, Johannes. 1911. *Die heilige Hildegard von Bingen, Aus dem Orden des heiligen Benedikt, 1098-1179: Ein Lebensbild*. Munich: Kösel and Pustet. 211

¹⁸ Hoppin, *Medieval Music*, 104

¹⁹ Hoppin, Richard H. *Anthology of Medieval Music*. New York: Norton, 1978. 1

11th and 12th centuries that brought modal theory to its heights.²⁰ Apel mentions Hermannus in connection to the chant *Alma Redemptoria Mater* in a section on the free compositions of chants according to type, particularly the antiphon.²¹ Apel also mentions a list of late chant composers, in which Hermannus is included.²² Today, none of these lists is commonly found in textbooks of Music and Music from the Middle Ages.

Returning to Hoppin, it is equally interesting to note the inclusion of a vast number of Late Medieval Offices along with their composers, if known. In his chapter on the Divine Offices, he lists numerous composers from this period along with the works that are attributed to them. Again, he makes no mention of Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutem* when he discusses liturgical drama, and he does not mention the Offices of Hermannus Contractus.²³ The exclusion of Hildegard's *Ordo Virtutem* is probably due to the dearth of information in proliferation about her music during the time of the book's publications. She had not yet reached musical popularity. The exclusion of Hermannus, one could imagine, is in part due to the simple testament that there were many composers from this period, all writing good music, and not all of them can be discussed in a survey of the period. Hoppin, however, does a good job at including as many as possible in a short span, contrary to what is typically found in today's literature.

As Jennifer Bain puts it in her article, *Hildegard, Hermannus, and Late Chant Style*, “[t]he idea of Hildegard's music as original, innovative, and standing outside contemporaneous practice has become a commonplace theme in modern scholarship about her music.”²⁴ Richard Crocker, in his book *Medieval Chant*, maintains, for example, that “chant for Hildegard seems to

²⁰ Wilson, 82

²¹ Apel, 104

²² Ibid., 154

²³ Hoppin, *Medieval Music*, 172-186

²⁴ Bain, *Late Chant Style*, 123

have been a melodic response to her inner vision, a cantorial effusion that used the standard neumatic language but with an extraordinary intensity and individual inflection"²⁵

Barbara Newman, in her text *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum*, makes an even stronger case in support of Hildegard's individuality. In her seminal and scholarly edition of translations of Hildegard's lyrical texts, she describes Hildegard's musical style, claiming that, "As a Benedictine, she was acquainted with a large repertoire of chant, but she lacked formal training and made no attempt to imitate the mainstream poetic and musical achievements of her day"²⁶. It is certainly clear that Hildegard had a novel approach to the texts of her hymns and sequences, forgoing most of the standard poetic structures and topics of her contemporaries, but her music itself is arguably not as novel. Newman asserts further that Hildegard's music is "impossible to classify in terms of any known contemporary movement"²⁷. Clearly by the final decade of the twentieth century, Hildegard and research on her music has shunted all other music of her contemporaries aside, and perhaps not justifiably so, considering how not novel her music might actually be.

David Hiley, noted musicologist and leading expert on the music of Hermannus Contractus and his contemporaries, having within the past decade published new critical editions of and articles concerning Hermann's and other's Offices, has been crucial in questioning the "novelty" of Hildegard's music. Both Pfau and Bain reference Hiley extensively in their own work. With the availability and proliferation of Hermann's music and his one musical treatise in various languages, numerous musicologists have begun to re-recognize this composer and his contemporaries as significant figures in the development of sacred monophonic music in

²⁵ Crocker, Richard. 1990. "Medieval Chant." In *The Early Middle Ages to 1300*, ed. Richard Crocker and David Hiley, 225-309. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 301

²⁶ Newman, Barbara, trans, and ed. 1988. *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 27

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28

Northern Europe during the 11th and 12th centuries. Slowly, the shoulders of those giants that Hildegard has stood on are being recognized again, and it is becoming clear that her music, while well written and fascinating in its own right, is not as original and out of the ordinary as it has been thought and taught for the past twenty to thirty years.

How might one begin proving this point? Scholars like Pfau and Bain have begun comparing contemporary music by composers such as Hermannus Contractus to the works of Hildegard. Herein we will add to those initial comparative remarks by giving a brief stylistic appraisal of a select few works of these two composers, particularly those works which might be the most similar in all regards, being of the same chant genre, for the same liturgical purpose, and for the same genre of liturgical celebration. Thus, since all those pieces that we can assuredly attribute to Hermannus are from Offices for Saints, we should compare his works with those works by Hildegard which would clearly function as part of some Office for some Saint. It so happens that there is a collection of chants by Hildegard which very well could have served this function: those chants written for St. Ursula. From this particular portion of her collection of works, there is a select number of chants, which have a clear and particular liturgical function.

Pfau identifies these pieces in her editorial remarks in the newest edition of the *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum, vol. VII: chants for Saint Ursula and companions* (1997). She states that the chants comprising this portion of the *Symphonia* seem to have been composed for some liturgical intent, but the exact liturgical function of all the pieces is not completely understood.²⁸ In this collection there are nine antiphons (numbers 61 and 63.1-8), two responsories (numbers 60 and 62), one sequence (number 64), and one hymn (number 65). All

²⁸ Hildegard von Bingen, and Marianne Richert. Pfau. *Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum*. Vol. 1-8. Bryn Mawr, PA: Hildegard Publ., 1997. n. pag. (introduction)

these chants, according to Pfau, almost certainly “furnished a special ‘Officium’ for Ursula.”²⁹ This “Office” is not as complete as other Offices, such as Hermann’s, which contain anywhere from thirty to fifty various chants, possibly including invitatories, antiphons, responsories, versicles, hymns, cantica, collects, sequences, psalms and lessons. Pfau believes Hildegard’s chants to St. Ursula are probably confined to a single office hour rather than the full eight, for in both musical manuscripts which contain her music, the eight short antiphons of #63 bear the rubric “*Laudes*” or “*In matutinis laudibus*.”³⁰ This suggests that they belonged to the monastic office of Lauds.

It would thus seem appropriate to do a comparative study of those Hildegard antiphons given to the Lauds Office for St. Ursula to those Hermannus antiphons given to the Lauds Office for one of his Offices. These chants, being not only of the same musical genre and liturgical function, but also of the same liturgical genre (for the Divine Office of Lauds for a Saint), would serve as the most apt comparative examples to see any stylistic similarities, influences, or differences.

A cursory glance at Appendix I, with transcriptions of the Lauds Antiphons for the Office of St. Magnus by Hermannus, show one the way in which nearly all these chants use the fifth above the finalis, the fourth below in plagal modes, and the octave above in authentic modes as melodic goals, or as “pillars on which to hang the free-flowing melismatic lines”³¹ as David Hiley describes the style. Furthermore, there are frequent leaps outlining the octave species, leaps between finalis and upper fifth as well as between upper fifth and upper octave. This melodic idea, emphasizing fourths and fifths as part of an octave understanding of modal theory

²⁹ Ibid., n. pag. (introduction)

³⁰ Ibid., n. pag. (introduction)

³¹ Hiley, David. “The *Historia Sancti Magni* by Hermannus Contractus (1013–1054).” *Collected Work: Music in medieval Europe: Studies in honour of Bryan Gillingham*. Pages: 367-391. 375

rather than hexachordal understanding, is a new trend beginning in the 11th century, which is outlined by Hermannus in his own musical treatise mentioned above. Bain points out Hiley's account of the relationship between Hermann's theoretical and compositional output when she writes:

“David Hiley describes Hermannus's compositional elaboration of his theoretical species of fourths, fifths, and octaves through the emphasis of the primary tones (final, fifth, and octave) at the level of the gesture and the phrase “³²

This understanding of modal theory as species of fourths, fifths, and octaves becomes significant during and following this period. Much of the music of Hermannus and his contemporaries reflects this new idea³³, which is later carried into Hildegard's own practice over half a century later. Bain makes this same conclusion while also recognizing that it is not the first time it has been made:

³² Pfau, *Late Chant Style*, 125, citing Hiley, David. “Das Wolfgang-Offizium des Hermannus Contractus: zum Wechselspiel von Modustheorie und Gesangspraxis in der Mitte des XI. Jahrhunderts.” *Die Offizien des Mittelalters* (1999): 129–142. Print. 141

³³ Unlike his contemporary, Guido of Arezzo, Hermannus of Reichenau, along with his disciples and his own teacher Berno of Reichenau, used species of fourths, fifths, and octaves to describe the character of the various modes. Hermannus outlines his ideas in his treatise, *Musica Hermannii Contracti*, cited in the bibliography. Guido, on the other hand, describes the four general modes and their character in his *Micrologus* according to the grouping of tones (whole steps) and semitones (half steps) surrounding the final. When later, he describes the division of the four modes into the eight plagal and authentic modes, he diverges from describing the intervallic space around the finals to describing intervallic distances that one may span above and below the respective finals. In contrast to Guido, Hermannus goes into great detail describing the species of fourths, fifths, and octaves and their tone/semitone construction (Ellinwood 1936, 26-31), before he discusses how they may be combined to form the four modes and two-fold division (31-47). Particularly interested in emphasizing the outer boundaries of the species, he summarizes that, for example, “Protus is arranged from A to d [a twelfth], and has its middle pitches on D [in plagal] and a [in authentic]” (42). He encourages the student to sing the various species of fourth, fifth, and octave in order to be able to recognize and reproduce the mode accurately. In doing so, he again emphasizes the outer limits of the species by encouraging the student to sing from the bottom of the modes range to its top, progressing from the species of fourth (48), to the species of fifth (52), and then to the octave (55). (Bain, *Late Chant Style*, 125-126) In much of the music comprising his Offices for St. Wolfgang, Afra, and Magnus, Hermannus stresses these outer limits.

“This same emphasis on final, fifth, and octave is a well-documented and audible feature of the music of Hildegard, described by dozens of people and given detailed analytical discussion in Pfau's dissertation as well as my early work”³⁴

If one would refer to Appendix II, containing transcriptions of the Antiphons for the Office of St. Ursula by Hildegard von Bingen, one will clearly see her similar emphasis on the fourth, fifth, and octave species, using these tones as arrivals and “pillars” to support her highly melismatic lines. Her practice is clearly not new, it is only a continuation of a previous practice, albeit with some expansion, though this is not surprising given her temporal positioning well over fifty years after this practice was in full bloom in Northern Europe.

Furthermore, the claims that Hildegard’s music has a vastly expanded range as compared to other composers of chant at the time, also seem a bit overinflated given these comparative examples. While yes, some of Hildegard’s pieces do have extreme ranges, most of her pieces, including the ones in Appendix II mostly confine themselves within the range of an octave. Also, those piece by Hermannus, written more than half a century before, also, at times, exceed the range of an octave. If more of his pieces were to be considered in this comparison, one would even discover that a number of his pieces well exceed an octave ambitus by as much as a fourth or fifth, such as the Magnificat Antiphon *Precelsi confessoris Christi* for the First Vespers for the Feast of St. Magnus. This chant, in Mode I (Dorian Authentic), ranges from C below the final to the f an octave and a fourth higher, making the total ambitus a Perfect 11th. A further example of this from the same Office is the Responsory VIII for Matins, *Miris magnorus*. This chant, in G-

³⁴ Bain, *Late Chant Style*, 128, referencing Pfau, Marianne Richert. “Hildegard von Bingen’s Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum: An Analysis of Musical Process, Modality, and Text-Music Relations.” N. p., 1990. and Bain, Jennifer, (Author). “Selected Antiphons of Hildegard von Bingen: Notation and Structural Design.” N. p., 1995.

Mixolydian spans from the C a perfect fifth below the final to the A a major ninth above the final, giving this piece a total ambitus of a major thirteenth. Hermannus had just as much of an extended range in his compositional artillery as Hildegard did almost a hundred years after his death. Is it then justifiable to claim that Hildegard's chants were "unprecedented"? Have her expansions on the styles of the 11th and 12th centuries progressed so much as to disconnect her from any possible influences and justify her place as sole representative of two centuries of liturgical music in Northern Europe?

Further arguments can be made, even in the context of these few pieces appended here. One will notice Hildegard's occasional use of both B-natural and B-flat in her chants, often causing a shift in modal perception. This has also been a claim to fame for the Abbess, an unusual feature of her music that supposedly sets herself apart. However, Hermannus uses the B-note equally as interestingly. Hermannus is one of the first composers to begin using B-flat in such a consistent manner as to completely shift some of his chants out of the traditional eight mode system into a prototype of our modern major scale. While this mode was never recognized as "major" or "Ionian," it was not a true Lydian mode, as defined in earlier musical treatises by scholars like Boethius. *Alma redemptoris mater* is of course famous for this idiosyncrasy, but it can consistently be observed in Hermann's music, such as in the first example in Appendix I.

Furthermore, Hildegard's use of both B-flat and B-natural in single chants is not a new idea. Jennifer Bain, in her dissertation, makes this point clearly. She explains the use of both B's in a number of Hildegard's pieces. According to her, since the C- and A-final pieces do not neatly fit into the eight-mode system, they are typically considered transposition of other modes by many scholars. Bain writes,

“These possibilities for transposition arises from the presence of both B-flat and B-natural in some medieval theorists’ modal systems. According to the eleventh century writers Hermannus Contractus and his teacher Berno of Reichenau, species of fourths and fifths – tonal spaces which contain specific interval patterns of tones and semitones – can define modalities by their juxtaposition.”³⁵

Thus an A-final piece resembles D-modality with B-flat, or if B-flat is present in the A-final piece it resembles E-modality; a C-final piece without B-flat can resemble either an F-modality with B-flat, or if B-flat is present in the C-final piece it resembles G with B-natural.³⁶ Clearly, the ideas that Hildegard is utilizing in her work are not unprecedented. If these ideas were being written about by Hermannus and Berno of Reichenau, then these practices were probably already in common usage. As it typically goes, theory follows practice, and not so much the reverse. If these ideas were being codified, then they were probably in practice before Hermannus, before Berno, and thus well before Hildegard von Bingen.

Yet another argument can still be made. It is often claimed that Hildegard’s melismatic style is also unprecedented. Her chants are simply far more melismatic than any typical chant from her period. If we take the entire collection of chants for Saint Ursula, we will find that the longest melisma is in her antiphon (not excerpted here), *O rubor sanguinis* (D. folio 167r and R folio 471v). The melisma, occurring on the word “*numquam*,” is 30 notes long. Interestingly however, if we take as comparison the entire collection of chants from Hermann’s Office for Saint Magnus, the longest melisma occurs in Responsory XI for Matins, *Confessor Domini sanctissime*; the melisma is 32 notes long. Furthermore, Hildegard’s above mentioned melisma

³⁵ Bain, Jennifer, (Author). “Selected Antiphons of Hildegard von Bingen: Notation and Structural Design.” N. p., 1995. 9

³⁶ Ibid.

only spans an octave, while Hermann's melisma spans a Perfect 11th (an octave plus a fourth). Yet again, it is clear that Hildegard's melismatic treatment of texts is not unprecedented, nor is it necessarily outrageous in comparison.

John D. White, in his article *The Musical World of Hildegard of Bingen* (published 1998), rebukes the lack of musicological appreciation for Hildegard of Bingen before the 1990's when he writes,

“... though known to literary and cultural historians as the ‘Sybil of the Rhine’ for her prophetic and visionary writings, [Hildegard's] achievements as a composer have been totally ignored in this century until the past decade or so. That she is now beginning to take her proper and justified place in music history is due in large part to the contemporary feminist movement....”³⁷

While yes, it is perhaps valuable and important to recognize the musical contribution of Hildegard von Bingen, is her current status in the annals of music history completely “proper” or “justified”? Has her repositioning as seminal, original, novel, and unprecedented been truly validated by comprehensive, critical, and comparative studies of her music in relation to those who preceded her? It is justifiable to erase from music history curriculums all those contemporary to her, under the argument that she was the most original and prolific artist of her region during her day? Given the evidence herein, and given the evidence offered through studies by Pfau, Bain, and Hiley, among others, it is difficult to think this repositioning of Hildegard's music above all contemporary composer's music, and the practice of teaching her music as the most novel and original for her time, as completely justified.

³⁷ White, John. “The Musical World of Hildegard of Bingen.” *College music symposium* 38 (1998): 8

The promotion and hype of Hildegard in recent years have even become a detriment to her contemporaries to the point of unjustifiably crediting her with the composition of other's works. In the recent Hildegard themed CD, *Canticles of Ecstasy*, released by the well-known group Sequentia, the ensemble decided to include a performance of *Alma redemptoris mater*.³⁸ Surprisingly, in the information for the track of this chant, the composer was listed as anonymous.³⁹ Furthermore, the supplemental booklet contained within described the CD as

“[a] series of recordings of [Hildegard's] music. This arrangement of Marian antiphons, sequences, and responsories, and songs to the Supreme Spirit, shows the full scope of Hildegard's compositional power and imagination....”⁴⁰

Despite the research available at the time of this CD's release (2010) that indicates Hermannus' probable authorship of *Alma redemptoris mater*, the ensemble did not feel it necessary to indicate that “this arrangement of Marian antiphons” is not the sole authorship of Hildegard, nor did they feel it necessary to actually list the “anonymous” composer's name. Has Hildegard's place in music history become so prominent that we now allow her to represent and even claim the creative property of her contemporaries? Might it be that Hildegard-mania has begun to spin a bit out of control?

The end of the 20th century marks an interesting position for the study of Hildegard and her contemporaries, particularly Hermannus Contractus. It is, in fact, within the past year that we have celebrated the millennial birthday of Hermannus Contractus. The past twenty years have

³⁸ Hildegard von Bingen. *Hildegard Von Bingen: Canticles of Ecstasy*. Cologne Sequentia Ensemble for Medieval Music. Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 2010. CD.

³⁹ Ibid., supplemental booklet, n. pag.

⁴⁰ Ibid., back cover

seen a shift in the study of music history for a number of reasons. The modern rediscovery and promotion of Hildegard's music has often been tied to the rise of the modern feminist movement as noted by John White above. It is within the past twenty years that women have become popular in historical studies in music, and found voices in the classical canon. Hildegard has been on these numerous voices. While the inclusion of women in the study of music history is greatly important and has been needed for a long time, should it necessarily be done to the exclusion of other individuals of equal or perhaps greater importance. Should it justifiable, given the evidence shown here and by others, to study Hildegard to the exclusion of all her contemporaries, even to the point of crediting her with their accomplishments and teach her as a completely "original," "novel," and "unprecedented" composer? While Hildegard was a phenomenal individual in many regards both within the field of music and beyond, and while her compositions are of high quality, she is, as far as she is a composer, clearly standing on the shoulders of known and identifiable giants, who were writing music of *at least* equal quality to her own.

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Appendix I

Musical Examples Hermannus Contractus

Hermannus Contractus, *Historia Sancti Magni: Ad Laudes*
Antiphone I *Comperta virtutum beati Magni*

Com - per - la vi - tu - tum be - a - ti Mag - ni fa - ma

Pip - pi - nus_ prin - ceps lo - cum, quem san - ctus in - co - lu - it,

re - gi - a lar - gi - ci - o - ne do - - - na - vit.

Hermannus Contractus, *Historia Sancti Magni: Ad Laudes*
Antiphone II *Cum ad pontificem Wicterpum*

Cum_ ad_ pon - ti - fi - cem Wic - ter - pum_ ve - nis - set_ vir_ De - i

i - dem_ cum_ The - o - do - ro, e - pi - sco - pus ca - put_ e - ius_

ce - le - sti vi - dit lu - mi - ne_ co - ro - na - ri.

Hermannus Contractus, *Historia Sancti Magni: Ad Laudes*
Antiphone III *Accito ad Campidonam*

Ac - ci - to ad Cam - pi - do - nam san - ctus MAg - nus_ e - pi - sco - po

o - ra - to - ri - um, quod The - o - do - rus in - i - bi_ con - stru - xit,

se pre - sen - te_ de - di - ca - ri im - - - pe - tra - vit.

Hermannus Contractus, *Historia Sancti Magni: Ad Laudes*Antiphone IV *Deo dignus diaconus Wicterpi*

Do-o___ dig - nus di - a - co - nus Vic - ter - pi pre - si - lis pe - ti - ci - o - ne
 co - ac - tus sa - cer - do - ta - lem di - gnis - si - me
 ab e - o pre - ce - pit be - ne - di - cti - o - nem.

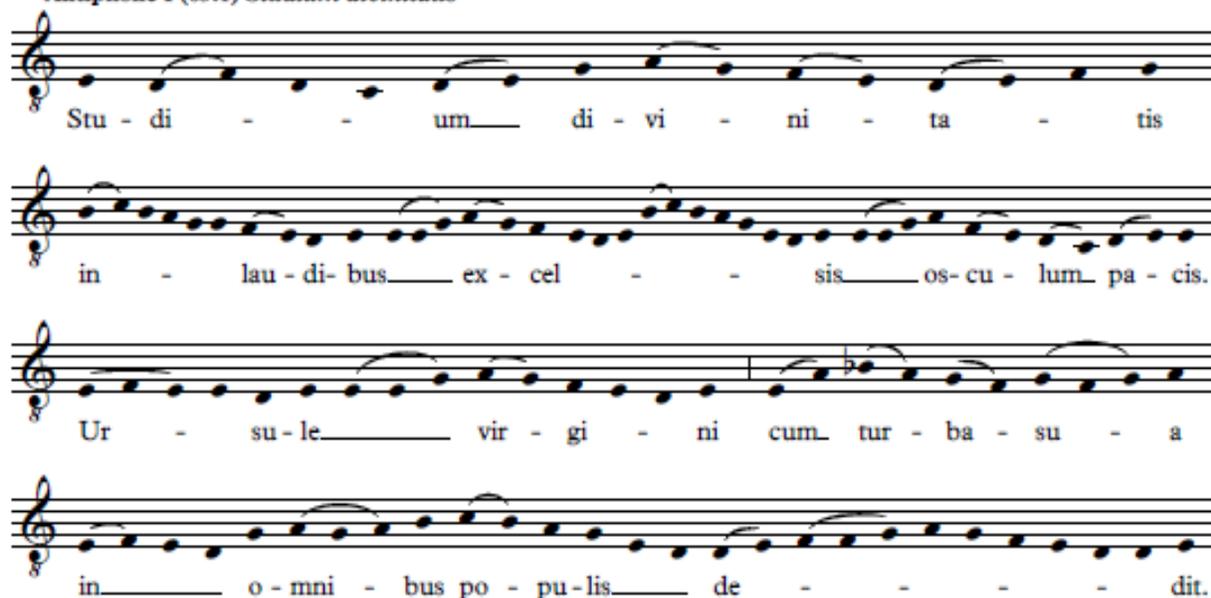
Hermannus Contractus, *Historia Sancti Magni: Ad Laudes*Antiphone V *Divina donante clemencia*

Di - vi - na do - nan - te cle - men - ci - a vir___ Do - mi - ni ur - so mon - stran - te
 et ob - se - quel - lam ad___ nu - tum. e - ius - pre - ben - te
 ve - nas fer - ri ad us - um pos - te - ri - ta - tis me - ru - it___ in - ve - ni - re.

Appendix II

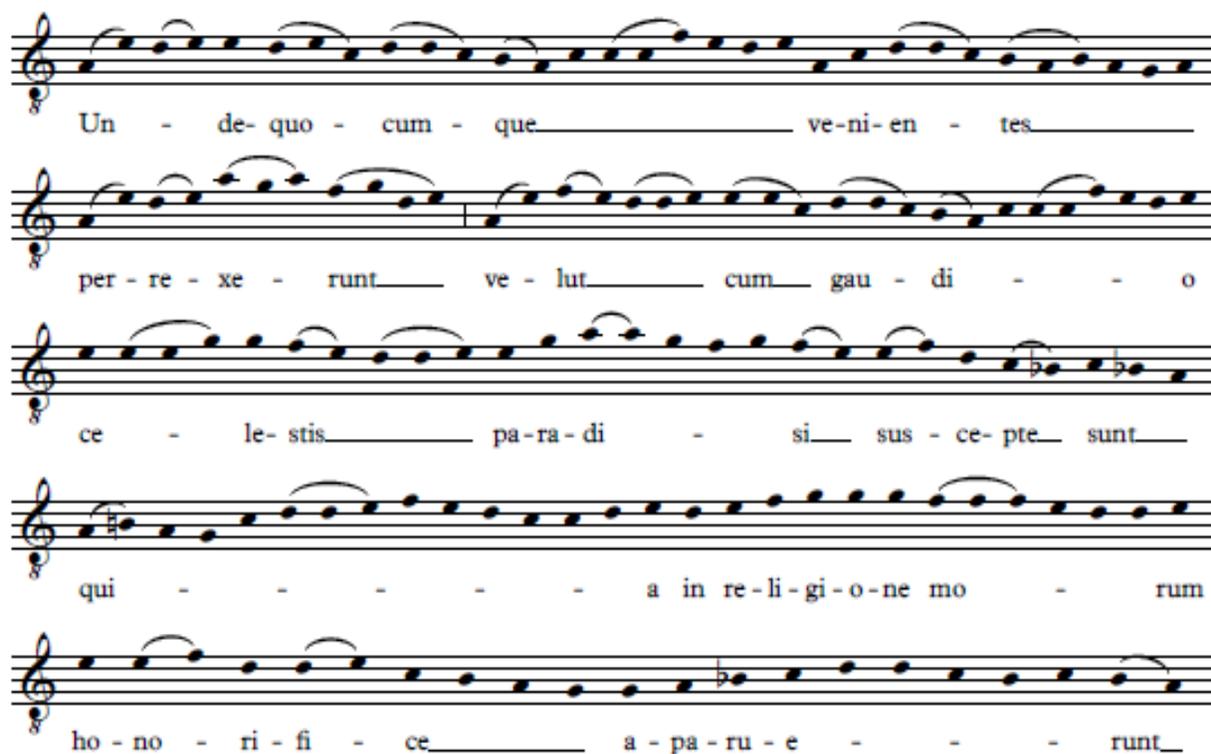
Musical Examples Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
Antiphone I (63.1) *Studium divinitatis*



Stu - di - - - um di - vi - ni - ta - tis
in - lau - di - bus ex - cel - - sis os - cu - lum pa - cis.
Ur - su - le vir - gi - ni cum tur - ba - su - a
in omni - bus po - pu - lis de - - - - dit.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
Antiphone II (63.2) *Unde quocumque*



Un - de - quo - cum - que ve - ni - en - tes
per - re - xe - runt ve - lut cum gau - di - - o
ce - le - stis pa - ra - di - si sus - ce - pte sunt
qui - - - - a in re - li - gi - o - ne mo - rum
ho - no - ri - fi - ce a - pa - ru - e - - - - runt

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
 Antiphone III (63.3) *De patria*

De pa - tri - a e - ti - am e - a - rum
 et de a - li - is re - gi - o - ni - bus vi - ri - re - li - gi - o - si
 et - sa - pi - en - tes - i - psis ad - iun - cti - sunt
 qui e - as in vir - gi - ne - a cu - sto - di - a ser - va - bant
 et qui e - is in om - ni - bus mi - ni - stra - bant.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
 Antiphone IV (63.4) *Deus enim in prima*

De - us e - nim in pri - ma mu - li - e - re
 pre - si - gna - vit ut mu - li - er a vi - ri cu - sto - di - a
 nu - tri - re - tur.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
 Antiphone V (63.5) *Aer enim volat*

A - er e - nim vo - lat et cum om - ni - bus cre - a - tu - ris
 of - fi - ci - a su - a ex - er - cet et - fir - ma - men - tum e - um su - sti - net
 ac a - er in vi - ri - bus i - sti - us - pa - sci - tur.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
Antiphone VI (63.6) *Et ideo puelle*

Et i - de - o pu - el - le i - ste
per - sum - mum vi - rum su - sten - ta - ban - tur
ve - xil - la - te in re - ga - li
pro - le vir - gi - ne - e na - tu - re.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
Antiphone VII (63.7) *Deus enim rorem*

De - us e - nim ro - rem in il - las mi - sit
de quo mul - ti - plex fa - ma cre - - - vit
i - ta quod om - nes po - pu - li ex hac ho - no - ra - bi - li fa - ma
ve - lut ci - bum gu - sta - bant.

Hildegard von Bingen, *Eight Antiphons for St. Ursula: In matutinis laudibus*
Antiphone VIII (63.8) *Sed diabolus*

Des di - a - bo - lus in in - vi - di - a su - a i - stud ir - ri - sit
qua nul - lum o - pus De - i in - ta - ctum di mi - - - sit.