



Women's voices, medieval music  
Direction: Rebecca Bain

# *Celles qui voient*

## Medieval women's voices in contemporary composition

In 2018, Ensemble Scholastica revisited one of its favourite composers, 12<sup>th</sup> century Abbess and famous healer **Hildegard von Bingen**. In a concert made possible by grants from the Arts Councils of Canada and Montréal, we performed a series of Hildegard's visionary songs before a rapt audience. We completed our program with a work composed for us by the up-and-coming Montréal-based composer **Noa Haran** that used Hildegard's words to comment on the visionary experience. This work was entitled « Elle qui voit, elle qui entend ».

This experiment incorporating contemporary music into a program of medieval sacred song was its own visionary experience for the ensemble. The process of working with a composer on brand new material that is rooted in text was very organic, and it proved to be very similar to the way in which we learn medieval material. As a result, though their sonorities were quite different, the modern served as a perfect foil and compliment to the medieval aesthetic. We were eager to expand this experiment into a complete program on the theme of women's voices, alternating medieval and contemporary sonorities throughout.

The concert on June 7 affords us this opportunity. Our program will include sacred and secular works by medieval composers such as Hildegard von Bingen, as well as several specially commissioned works by some of our favourite local composers.

In addition to a longer and more complex version of Haran's work that we presented in 2018, we will feature compositions by three other women

composers. **Elizabeth Ekholm** happens to be one of our singers, but she is also a composer whose choral works have been awarded international prizes. For this concert, she will be setting a poem by the controversial German mystic of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, **Mechthild von Magdeburg**.

**Karen Young** has been long been one of the most important musicians of Quebec's jazz scene. She has also been a frequent composer and arranger of choral works. Her compositions blend many different styles, and she has drawn inspiration frequently from the music of the Middle Ages. For this program, Karen will compose a piece setting the poetry of the prolific 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century poet, novelist, historian and essayist **Christine de Pizan**. Christine is known as the first professional femmes de lettres, and her critique of the negative depiction of women in literature remained famous long after her time.

And finally, we are very excited to be working with one of the seminal figures of Montreal's "musique actuelle" scene, **Danielle Palardy Roger**. The work that Roger will be composing for and with us in workshop will be based on the writings of the female troubadours of 12<sup>th</sup> century Occitania, the **troubairitz**.

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**June 7 2020, 7 pm**  
Sacré-Cœur-de-Jésus Church, Montréal

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