Hildegard von Bingen

born
1098
Bemersheim, Germany

died
1179
Rupertsberg
near Bingen, Germany

"The oldest, truest, most beautiful organ of music, the origin to which alone our music owes its being, is the human voice.
–Richard Wagner
"

Hill´-duh-gahrd fun Bing´-en.
"von Bingen" refers to the town where Hildegard lived.
"Von" means "from" in German, and Bingen is a town. She is referred to as Hildegard, not "von Bingen."

A composer of the Medieval era.

Even though Hildegard von Bingen lived approximately 900 years ago, we know a great deal about her. Throughout her life she kept journals and corresponded extensively with others. Her father was a nobleman, her mother a noblewoman. Hildegard was their tenth child, and tradition required that the tenth child should be dedicated to the church. When Hildegard was eight, her parents sent her to a convent which was part of a monastery. Here she joined a religious order led by a nun known as Jutta of Spanheim, who many believed was a psychic and mystic. Hildegard became a nun at 15.

When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard succeeded her as the Mother Superior of the order. She was 38. Within a few years, she claimed to have visions from God, and, eventually, she began writing down those visions. The church considered her a prophetess and visionary, and many church members began to seek her advice on personal and religious matters.

Sometime between 1147 and 1150 Hildegard founded a new monastery near Rudesheim, Germany. She wrote at great length on many subjects, and she exchanged correspondence with popes, kings, dukes, archbishops, and politicians. Many important and powerful men consulted her on matters of church and state. She also wrote poems and set at least 77 of them to music.

During Hildegard's time, music for the church consisted of **chants** which were sung by male monks. Hildegard, however, composed her music to be sung by the nuns of her order. No other composer of the period wrote music for female voices.

Hildegard seemed to write endlessly, both music and text. She wrote an encyclopedia describing various herbal medicines she had developed. This caused people to visit her to ask her to prescribe various herbs for their illnesses. She wrote biographies of several saints, numerous religious books, and even a play. She composed much of her music between 1150 and 1160.

At the age of 60, Hildegard began traveling and preaching throughout Germany. She was controversial during her lifetime. She claimed to have mystical powers, but not everyone believed her. In 1165 she moved her order of nuns to Bingen, Germany. After her death at age 81, there were several efforts to canonize her, but all the efforts failed.

Hildegard was not educated in the true sense of the word. All her knowledge came from her religious training. Her music is known as **plainsong** chant, the type of music sung in churches during the Middle Ages. But Hildegarde's compositions are unique because they were written for female voices. She often claimed that she received her music and her writings directly from God. Because of her many writings, Hildegard is considered one of the greatest women of the Middle Ages.

©MMI by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
NOTE: The purchase of this book carries with it the right to photocopy this page.

Hildegard von Bingen

What I composed	Orchestra	Concerto	Chamber Music	Keyboard	Opera	Theater/Film	Ballet	Band	Choral	Vocal Solos
Hildegard von Bingen									>	

Hildegard Factoids:

- Hildegard claimed her music came to her in visions.
- One of her many books was based on a secret language which she invented.
- Hildegard was an expert on herbs and their healing properties. Many of the texts for her music included references to plants, animals, and minerals.
- Although Hildegard was one of the most remarkable women of her era, she considered herself to be nothing more than "a poor little woman."

1098: Birth of Hildegard von Bingen; French physician Nicolas Provost writes *Antidotes,* a collection of more than 2500 prescriptions for the treatment of disease.

1100: Native Americans are using the canoe regularly.

1120: The wimple, a fine veil worn by women over the head and wound around the shoulders, becomes fashionable in England.

1131: Pope Innocent II at Reims, France crowns Louis, the son of King Louis VI of France, as king; he rules with his father as joint king.

1143: Robert of Chester and Hermann the Dalmatian make the first translation of the Koran into Latin.

1154: Henry II Plantagenet is crowned as king of England founding the Plantagenet dynasty.

1162: Thomas á Becket, Chancellor to King Henry II of England, is consecrated as archbishop of Canterbury.

1179: Death of Hildegard von Bingen; before her death she writes *Physica*, a closely observed encyclopedia of natural history.

What in the world is happening?

©MMI by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
NOTE: The purchase of this book carries with it the right to photocopy this page.

Listen!

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)
Kyrie Eleison

Hildegard von Bingen was a nun who became the abbess, or leader, of a Benedictine monastery in Bingen, Germany. The Benedictines were, among other things, musicians of the Roman Catholic Church. Hildegard's music was performed by the nuns in this Benedictine monastery. To Hildegard, serving God was her most important duty, and one of her best ways to do so was through composing music. She believed that every song she composed, every vision, every poem, was the result of God speaking through her.

Hildegard's music was innovative, and her compositions do not conform to musical styles of her time. Although she wrote music for established texts used in church, she also composed music set to her own original poetry. All of her music is meant to be sung and it falls under the general heading of **chant** (sometimes called **plainsong** chant). The most well known form of chant is Gregorian Chant written during the rule of Pope Gregory from 590-604 in Rome, Italy. Other forms of chant include Ambrosian in Milan, Italy, Gallican in France, and Mozarabic in Spain.

All chant is vocal music that is sung without any accompaniment. The simple melodies are sung in unison and are a musical form of prayer. Most chant music was composed for and performed by men. Hildegard's abbey in Bingen, Germany consisted of about fifty women, and her music was written and performed by these nuns. The women sang in church for several hours each day so there was a great need for Hildegard to compose a large volume of music. Her form of chant is very colorful, using a large melodic range. Hildegard was a truly remarkable woman and she is considered one of the greatest female composers of all time.

The Listening Example is a Kyrie, a section of the Roman Catholic mass. You will hear the opening section of the piece. There are four melodies in this section. When more than one melody occurs in a piece, musicians label the melodies with letters: A, B, C, D, and so on. In this example, listen for each of the melodies. Sometimes a melody is sung by a soloist, and sometimes by a small group of singers. There is no accompaniment. Singing without any accompaniment is called *a cappella* singing. Hear how the melodies flow.

> **"Song is man's sweetest joy.**
> ***–Musaeus (c. 900 B.C.)***
> **"**

TIMING

:01	The "A" melody.
:14	The "B" melody.
:27	A repeat of the "A" melody. The "B" melody repeats at :39.
:53	Another repeat of the "A" melody. The "B" melody repeats at 1:03.
1:13	The "C" melody is introduced. This melody has a higher note than either of the previous melodies. Listen for it.
1:33	The "D" melody is introduced. This melody goes lower than any of the previous melodies.
1:43	A repeat of the "C" melody.

©MMI by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
NOTE: The purchase of this book carries with it the right to photocopy this page.

Review!

Hildegard von Bingen **Name** _____

Place the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.
For True/False questions, print True or False in the space provided.

1. Hildegard was born just over _____.
   A. 9000 years ago
   B. 900 years ago
   C. 90 years ago
   D. 9 years ago

2. True or False: During Hildegard's lifetime, many composers wrote music for female voices. _____

3. True or False: Hildegard claimed to have mystical powers. _____

4. Hildegard wrote a book on _____.
   A. U.S. presidents
   B. opera
   C. German history
   D. herbal medicines

5. True or False: Hildegard also wrote the words for some of the music she composed. _____

6. Which of the following is a type of chant? _____
   A. Gregorian chant
   B. Middle age chant
   C. Classical chant
   D. all of the above

7. True or False: Chant is a type of vocal music that is sung without any accompaniment. _____

8. True or False: Hildegard believed that one of the best ways to serve God was through composing music. _____

9. Hildegard lived during the _____.
   A. Renaissance era
   B. Baroque era
   C. Classical era
   D. Medieval era

10. In addition to music, Hildegard also wrote _____.
    A. books
    B. journals
    C. a play
    D. all of the above

Bonus:

How many melodies did you hear in the Listening Example? _____

©MMI by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
NOTE: The purchase of this book carries with it the right to photocopy this page.