

featuring  
CHOIR MATRIX  
and  
WOMEN of CONCINNITY

These ensembles are sponsored by:  
*Consonare Choral Community*



Sunday, November 14, 2021  
3:00pm

*New Britain Museum  
of American Art*



MUSICIANS

Sarah Kaufold  
*Artistic Director*

Janice Castle  
*Collaborative Pianist*

Sofia DiNatali, *cello*

Rex Sturdevant, *percussion*

*Women of Concinnity*

Erin Bartram  
Liz Bologna  
Grace Carver  
Carolina Flores  
Kara Hart  
Sarah Kaufold  
Erica Shippee  
Alex Walker



*Consonare*  
CHORAL COMMUNITY

[www.consonare-sing.org](http://www.consonare-sing.org)

# CLAIMING SPACE

*songs composed under constraints*

## PROGRAM

*Nos sumus in mundo (from Songs for Hildegard)* Carlotta Ferrari  
Text: Verse 8 (*O dulcissime amator*) by Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

### CLOISTERED

*Ave Regina caelorum* Isabella Leonard (1620-1704)  
Arranged for treble voices by Meredith Bowen

*Motetti, Op 2: O dulcis amor* Caterina Assandra (c.1590-c.1618)

*Domine, Dominus noster* Lucrezia Vizzana (1590-1662)

### POETIC

*We grow accustomed to the Dark* Linda Kachelmeier  
Poem by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

*Witch-Wife* Melissa Dunphy  
Poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)  
This song was commissioned by Choir Matrix - WORLD PREMIERE

*O Love* Elaine Hagenberg  
Poem by George Matheson (1842-1906)

### CONSEQUENTIAL

*Wild Embers* Melissa Dunphy  
Poem by Nikita Gill

*Begli Occhi, Op. 3* Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677)  
Poem by Loredano

*Lorelei* Clara Schumann (1819-1896)  
Arranged by Brandon Williams; Text by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856)

### RECLAIMING

*Maid on the Shore* arr. Kathleen Allan  
Traditional Ballad originating from Newfoundland and New England

*What happens when a woman* Alexandra Olsavsky

### CLOSING

*Quasi aurora (from Songs for Hildegard)* Carlotta Ferrari  
Text: Refrain (*O quam preciosa*) by Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

## MUSICIANS

### *Choir Matrix*

Cheryl Chase  
Maidie Cohen  
Theresa Cooper  
Joan Doiran  
Mary Douglas  
Bobbi Giardina  
Melia Kaufold  
Kerry Landeck  
Sarah Maliar  
Helene Marcy  
Maureen McDonnell  
Emily Myers  
Cynthia Myers  
Carol Norris  
Annette Pavone  
Norma Posocco  
Felicia Pratto  
Helena Silva  
Grace Slayton  
Margie Smith  
Marika Solomon-Marcy  
Stef Summers  
Lee Terry  
Laurel Thurman  
Marian Vitali

*Choir Matrix is our community ensemble open to all self-identified women with no audition. This fall, we invited some of our youth singers to join Matrix until our youth choirs resume in January.*

*Women of Concinnity consists of the sopranos and altos from our professional vocal chamber ensemble, Voices of Concinnity.*

*Consonare Choral Community is a nonprofit, registered 501(c)3 organization that strives to build community through choral music.*

For more information:



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## PROGRAM NOTES

This collaborative performance between our community ensemble, *Choir Matrix*, and the treble voices from our professional ensemble, *Voices of Concinnity*, was envisioned to uncover a wealth of choral music that illuminates the voice that can emerge from within constraints. This concert strives to explore the art that can blossom even in moments where it seems impossible.

**Hildegard von Bingen** was a theologian, writer and visionary who spent much of her life in an isolated, hilltop convent she founded in the 11th century. However, she may be best known as a composer of church music, specifically chant. Contemporary composer, **Carlotta Ferrari**, uses Hildegard's text within a chant-like style to pay homage to Hildegard, who has one of the largest repertoires of surviving music from a Medieval composer. "Nos sums in mundo" gives the impression of a single collective voice over a drone similar to the chant composed by Hildegard, but the melody and drone travel between both vocal parts.

In the 17th century, a woman had limited options: marry or become a nun. If a woman had musical talent, she could save her family considerable amounts of money on dowries if she secured a position as organist in a convent. The nuns and the local female music students they taught were renowned in Italy and people traveled great distances to hear their music until the Council of Trent, which required the nuns remain cloistered. Even though the Church had tried to control the music in the convents, some women and their families prevailed by publishing collections of music, which is the only reason we know of some of these composers. **Isabella Leonarda** is the most prolific nun composer, with 20 published volumes during her lifetime. "Ave Regina caelorum" is a Marian antiphon and would have likely been sung in the chapel with the nuns singing and playing behind a wall or iron gate to obscure their faces from the public. The motets of **Caterina Assandra** were among the first of the Roman style to be published in Milan. The cloistered nuns strove to maintain a level of music performance equal to the quality found outside the walls of the convent, which was the case with composer, singer, and organist, **Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana**, who published the only musical collection by a nun from Bologna.

For some poets, their musings and words allowed for freedom within social constraints, which as been allowed to further blossom within these musical settings of their text. Emily Dickinson, considered one of the most famous poets in the history of American Literature, bent literary conventions... all from the confines of her reclusive life. **Linda Kachelmeier's** song illuminates Dickinson's text on learning to see regardless of the darkness through terracing of the voices at the beginning, a dramatic representation of the events in the poem, and the dying away of voices at the end. *Choir Matrix* commissioned composer **Melissa Dunphy**, who wrote a stunning composition on Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Witch-Wife" for our ensemble. Millay, who suffered from health issues most of her life, explored the unattainable in a number of her poems. In "Witch-Wife", being performed live for the first time since we received it in January 2020, uses the harmony (or shift between modes) to represent the questioning and uncertainty of the speaker, who definitively concludes at the end that "she will never be all mine." Composer **Elaine Hagenberg** has woven a beautiful setting for treble voices and cello, inspired by the words of George Matheson, who tragically lost his sight at age 19, leading to the end of his engagement. "O Love" was written on the eve of his sister's wedding as he recalled the loss of love he experienced in the face of challenges. This setting uses sweeping vocal motion and sparing close harmonies to express "Love that will not let me go."

A few of the compositions in this program incorporate body percussion, such as **Melissa Dunphy's** "Wild Embers". This compelling and folk-like composition, which explores the strength of the ancestral spirit, also incorporates non-pitched sounds to further illustrate the meaning of the text. **Barbara Strozzi** was hailed as one of the finest singers and composers of the Baroque period where the music compositions of few women endured through history. Her compositions of the accompanied solo voice are essential to the historical development of vocal music. The subject of *Begli occhi* is not triumphal, but vengeful for the wounding power of a lover's eyes. It is written for two closely intertwined soprano voices that often cross parts and clash in strong dissonances. Composer **Clara Wieck Schumann** was a celebrated pianist and composer, but had to curtail playing the piano as it disturbed her husband's composing. "Lorelei" was written as a birthday present to her husband Robert and illustrates her great facility writing for piano. It is a dramatic story that tells of the mermaids on the rocks of Lorelei on the Rhine who distract the sailors with their singing. You can hear the intensity of the scene and the rocking of the boat in the piano part.

**Kathleen Allan** has crafted a haunting folk-like sound for this traditional broadside ballad, which tells the story of a maid who was kidnapped by a sea captain's crew and manages to rob him in her escape. Whispered text and hand percussion enhance the mystery of how the maid exerted her strength with the composer creating a stunning dialogue at the end between the maid and the bewildered captain who asserts his men were crazy rather than outwitted. The body percussion of "What happens when a woman" creates a rhythmic foundation for this song originally sung by vocal trio, Artemisia, and composed by one of their members, **Alexandra Olsavsky**, who wrote the song for "the strong women of our world who seek to empower themselves by asking important questions."