

# Hildegard and Healing Chants

by Norma Gentile

*“O creation of God, which is human, in great sacredness you were brought forth...so that those angels ministering with God might see God in humanity”*  
-Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

*(Norma Gentile lives in the Ann Arbor area, when she’s not traveling throughout the U.S. and Canada creating workshops on sound healing, and performing healing concerts of chant. She is both a recording artist and trained intuitive healer. She is one of the foremost performers of the chants of the medieval abbess Hildegard von Bingen. Her recordings of Hildegard’s chants include ‘Unfurling Love’s Creation’ (Lyrichord Discs), ‘Meditation Chants’ (Ave Maria Press), and the newly re-released live concert recording ‘Healing Chants’.)*

Chant is giving voice to God. Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) and many others have stressed the connection that the arts, and in particular, that music offers us to Divinity. By ‘retuning’ ourselves, we return to spiritual alignment.

The Catholic Church used music, specifically chant, as the basis of worship services until this century. In the tradition of the Benedictine nuns, they sang eight Divine Offices or services each day. These services were supplemented with hours of private prayer and psalm recitation. The function of the Benedictine nuns was to be vessels or channels for the Divine to enter into the earth through their embodiment of spirit.

The chants composed by Hildegard were meant to be used as vehicles of devotion. Hildegard was writing music for the women who surrounded her in the monastery, and with whom she shared daily worship services.

Theses chants were meant to be sung by these women, and whether or not the general public was present did not alter the use of the music. In other words, the chants were not a presentation of music by the nuns for the general public. They were an expression of the communal spirit shared by the women and that same connection to God. In all likelihood the nuns, a dozen or at times two dozen, would have sung the music in a circle, turning their backs to any public present in the service.

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People have always used music as a way of ‘healing’ or ‘retuning’ themselves. From the simple practice of entrainment to the more complicated practices of mantra and overtone chant, the effect of sound making on the body is a shared experience.



Ann Arborite Norma Gentile is one of the nation’s foremost performers of the chants of the medieval abbess Hildegard von Bingen

By the act of entrainment many types of music relieve stress. Since most chant is based on either no meter or a rhythmic flow which is slower than the average resting heart rate we tend to relax when listening to it.

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In making any sound, whether it is spoken or sung, I find that my intent, both conscious and unconscious, rides in my voice. What I am experiencing is offered to the listener on all levels.

It is when we allow ourselves to be in an attitude of gratefulness for anything that we can more fully embrace the gifts that it has brought us. Music moves me to this point. It is my desire that through me Hildegard’s chants may move out to touch others as well.

Blessings to all who read this,  
-Norma Gentile



Hildegard von Bingen