

The Society of Historically Informed Performance presents

# The Witching Hour



The Pandora Consort  
Kendra Comstock, Angie Tyler,  
Gina Marie Falk, Lea Peterson,  
sopranos

# The Witching Hour

## Part I: The Invitation

O virtus sapientie———Hildegard von Bingen  
*Wisdom's power with her three wings surrounds and protects all*  
Mother Shipton's Prophecies———Saro Lynch  
The Witch———Mary Elizabeth Coleridge  
The Witches' Trio———Libby Larsen

## Part II: The Warning

Hare Spell———Traditional  
Bruja's Soliloquy———Rachel McKibbens  
O rubor sanguinis———Hildegard von Bingen  
*O blood of the highest one,  
you are the bloom untouched by the serpent*  
Fire from Savior———Amy Beth Kirsten

## Part III: The Purification

Witch Hunt———Samantha Healy  
O virgo ecclesia———Hildegard von Bingen  
*Sisters lament for those stolen from us, but beware oh serpent,  
for our mother will surely come for her children*  
Nunc gaudeant———Hildegard von Bingen  
*Now let our mother rejoice, for she has saved her child  
from the clutches of the evil ones*  
The Sister's Revenge———Traditional

## Part IV: The Rebirth

Witch-Wife———Edna St. Vincent Millay  
Juniper, Gentle, and Rosemary———Traditional  
Lullaby for the Witching Hour———Kerry Andrew

## Notes on the Program

### Folk Songs



#### **Mother Shipton's Prophecies**

"Mother Shipton's Prophecies" is a contemporary song composed and performed by Saro Lynch-Thomason, a singer, folklorist, and documentarian. Saro composed this song about Mother Shipton, a legendary English folk figure, who was a well-known prophet and witch in the 16th century. To learn more about Lynch's work visit [@songspeaksaro](http://www.sarosings.com)

#### **Hare Spell**

"Hare Spell" is a traditional tune that appeared in Maddy Prior's song cycle *The Fabled Hare* in her 1993 album *Year*. A version of the song was also performed by Fay Hield in 2020 for her album *Wrackline*. Fay Hield noted on the album "Taken from Isobel Gowdie's witch trial confessions of 1622 where she shares this spell to become a hare. Following the pattern of finding magic within, the melody comes out of the words, using the corresponding note name letters to build the frame of the tune." Our version of "Hare Spell" combines the introduction of Prior's version with the upbeat version that Hield performs.

#### **Juniper, Gentle, and Rosemary**

This tune can be traced throughout history, known by many names, including "Riddles Wisely Expounded / The Devil's Nine Questions / Juniper, Gentle and Rosemary / Bow Down to the Bonny Broom / The Three Sisters". In the 2007 album *All in a Garden Green*, the Askew Sisters noted: "Versions of this ancient ballad can be found dating back as far as 1444, where a young woman eludes the Devil by answering his riddles. This version comes from a street ballad issued in 1675 and has lost its supernatural qualities. The Devil has become a handsome knight, and the youngest sister gains the right to marry him by answering his riddles." Our version most closely resembles Magpie Lane's rendition from his 2002 album *Six for Gold*. This track was also included in the Wild Goose anthology *Songs of Witchcraft and Magic*.

#### **The Sister's Revenge**

The traditional Scandinavian ballad, "The Two Sisters" was first published in Robert Buchanan's *Ballad Stories of the Affections: From the Scandinavian* in 1869. Salt House later sang this ballad on their 2018 album, *Undersong*, changing the title to "The Sister's Revenge".

To learn more about English Folk music, visit: <https://mainlynorfolk.info/>

## Contemporary Songs

#### **Libby Larsen (The Witches' Trio)**

Libby Larsen is one of America's most performed living composers. She has composed over 500 works including orchestra, opera, vocal and chamber music, symphonic winds and band. Her work is widely recorded. An advocate for the music and musicians of our time, in 1973 Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composer's Forum. Grammy Award winner and former holder of the Papamarkou Chair at John W. Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Larsen has also held residencies with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. As Artistic Director of the John Duffy Institute for New Opera (2014-2020), she guides a faculty of practicing professional artists in nurturing and production of new opera by American Composers. Larsen's 2017 biography, *Libby Larsen: Composing an American Life*, Denise Von Glahn, author, is available from the University Illinois Press. Visit [www.libbylarsen.com](http://www.libbylarsen.com)

**Amy Beth Kirsten** (b. 1972) is known primarily for her for multi-year, multimedia theatrical collaborations. She has cast herself in roles as varied as composer, poet, filmmaker, vocalist, and director. Ms. Kirsten has been recognized with awards and fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2020), John S. Guggenheim Foundation (2010) and the Rockefeller Foundation (2009) and has created works for her own ensemble HOWL, musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony, Peak Performances, the multi-Grammy-winning eighth blackbird, among many others. She teaches at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, PA and is Director of The Artist Residency at Longy School of Music of Bard College in Cambridge, MA. Visit [www.amybethkirsten.com](http://www.amybethkirsten.com).

*Savior* is an evening length theatrical work inspired by the mystical life and death of Joan of Arc. Commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for MusicNOW with support from the Toulmin Foundation, the singers and creative artists from HOWL collaborate with musicians from the symphony to perform this work. World Premiere Performance April 2, 2018 in the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago. Kirsten's "Saviour" designs a soundscape and scene of the visions Joan of Arc experienced in the moments before her death. You may hear the murmuring of the crowd, crackling of the fire, and Joan calling out for Jesus. The text comes from the poem "Les Roses de Saadi" by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore.

#### **Fire from *Savior* (2016)**

J'ai voulu ce matin te rapporter des roses;  
Mais j'en avais tant pris dans mes ceintures closes  
Que les nœuds trop serrés n'ont pu les contenir.  
Jésu, Jésus...  
Les nœuds ont éclaté.  
Les roses envolées  
Dans le vent, à la mer s'en sont toutes allées.  
Elles ont suivi l'eau pour ne plus revenir.  
Jésu, Jésus...  
La vague en a paru rouge et comme enflammée.  
Ce soir, ma robe encore en est toute embaumée...  
Respires-en sur moi l'odorant souvenir.  
Jésu...? Can you hear me? Won't you come?  
Pleur alors, fille brave  
que ma voix te fasse pleurer, enfant fidèle,  
Jésu won't you come?

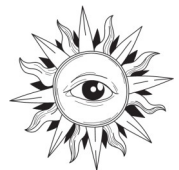
This morning I wanted to bring you roses,  
But I had put so many in my fastened sash  
That the knots, too tightly tied, could not hold them.

The knots burst open.  
The roses, taking flight  
In the wind, were all carried off into the sea.  
They flowed with the water, never to return.

They made the waves appear red, as though on fire.  
This evening, my dress is still perfumed with them...  
Inhale their fragrant memory upon me.

Weep now good daughter,  
let my voice make you weep, faithful child

*Translation by Hai-Ting Chinn, 2017*



#### **Kerry Andrew (Lullaby for the Witching Hour)**

Kerry Andrew is an author, composer and performer, whose novels *Swansong* and *SKIN* are published by Vintage. Kerry has been twice shortlisted for the BBC National Short Story Award. With a PhD in composition from the University of York and four British Composer Awards, Kerry specializes in experimental vocal and choral music, music-theater and community music, creates alt-folk as You Are Wolf and co-founded the award-winning Juice Vocal Ensemble. As a composer, Kerry has created work for Art on the Underground and BBC Ten Pieces at the BBC Proms. In 2010, Kerry won a British Composer Award for the choral work *Fall* in the Making Music category. In 2017, Kerry won a fourth award for the vocal/body percussion work 'who we are', premiered by the 600 singers of the massed National Youth Choirs of Great Britain at the Royal Albert Hall. Kerry co-founded the award-winning experimental post-a cappella trio Juice Vocal Ensemble, who have released two albums on the Nonclassical label. Kerry also performs alt-folk as You Are Wolf, exploring traditional songs and lore in unusual, electronica-tinged arrangements. Kerry was also a multi-instrumentalist with the rock/classical/jazz quintet DOLLYman. <https://kerryandrew.tumblr.com/>

## Hildegard von Bingen

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) was a German abbess, writer, philosopher, composer, mystic, and medical practitioner and scholar during the High Middle Ages. She was by far the most prolific composer of plainchant and more works can be contributed to Hildegard than any other composer of the Middle Ages. Hildegard experienced mystical visions from a very young age and outside the context and safety of the church she perhaps would have been labeled in a very different vein. Her knowledge of plants and her progressive philosophies are qualities that would brand women as witches just a few centuries later. Hildegard did fight against patriarchal power structures in protection of her nuns but was able to do so in a way that avoided her total condemnation by the church leaders at the time. Hildegard was a powerful woman in many regards and utilized her skills with tact and wisdom. Hildegard's writings, visions, and music are inextricably linked in her life and philosophy. For Hildegard the act of making music is an act of sacrament, channeling a glimpse of the divine into her compositions through her florid melodic writing and her mastery of rhetoric.

### **O virtus sapientie**

O power of wisdom,  
Whose circling orbit surrounds all things in  
one way of life, Three wings you have:  
One which soars in the heavens  
The second which on the earth moves  
And the third which encompasses all.  
Praise be to you, as is deserving,  
Oh wisdom.

### **O rubor sanguinis**

O bloody red,  
That from the highest flowed  
And was touched by divinity:  
You are the bloom  
that the wintry breath of the serpent  
Has never bruised.



### **O virgo ecclesia**

Oh sisters of the coven, let us lament!  
For the savage wolf has snatched your children from your side.  
Woe be to that sly serpent!  
But oh how precious is the blood of our mother,  
That with her symbol marked us as her own,  
For her children she is seeking.



### **Nunc gaudeant**

Now let us rejoice together, oh sisters of my soul,  
For in this exalted symphony she has gathered her children to her bosom.  
Oh vile snake, you have been confounded,  
For those you thought you had in your clutches  
Now shine with the blood of our mother.  
So praise be to you oh mother of all.

Alleluia!

*Translations by Angie Tyler*

## Poetry

### **The Witch by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge (1861–1907)**

British writer Mary Coleridge was well known in her day as a novelist and essayist; but now, she is better known for her poetry. Her works include her first book of poems, *Fancy's Following* (1896), the novels, *The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* (1893), *The King with Two Faces* (1897), and *The Lady on the Drawingroom Floor* (1906) Coleridge also taught grammar and literature to young women, first at her home and then, from 1895 on, at Working Women's College prior to her death in 1907.

### **Bruja's Soliloquy by Rachel McKibbens**

Poet, activist, playwright and essayist Rachel McKibbens is a New York Foundation for the Arts poetry fellow and author of the critically acclaimed volume of poetry, *Pink Elephant* (Cypher Books, 2009.) Regarded as one of the most dynamic speakers in the country, McKibbens is a legend within the poetry slam community, noted for her accomplishments both on and off the stage: she is a nine-time National Poetry Slam team member, has appeared on eight NPS final stages, coached the New York louderARTS poetry slam team to three consecutive final stage appearances, is the 2009 Women of the World Poetry Slam champion and the 2011 National Underground Poetry Slam individual champion. For four years McKibbens taught poetry through the Healing Arts Program at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan and continues to teach poetry and creative writing and give lectures across the country as an advocate for mental health awareness, gender-equality and victims of violence and domestic abuse.

<https://www.rachelmckibbens.com/>

### **Witch Hunt by Samantha Healy**

Contemporary poet Samantha Healy performed "Witch Hunt" at the 2017 Get Lit Classic Slam Semifinals, the largest youth poetry tournament in Southern California. This live performance is available on YouTube.

### **Witch-Wife by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892 – 1950)**

Poet and playwright Edna St. Vincent Millay was born in Rockland, Maine in 1892. In 1917, Millay published her first book, *Renascence and Other Poems*, followed by her first play, *The Lamp and the Bell* in 1921, a work about love between women. Millay published poems in *Vanity Fair*, the *Forum*, and others while writing short stories and satire under the pen name Nancy Boyd. Millay published *A Few Figs from Thistles* (1920), a volume of poetry which drew much attention for its controversial descriptions of female sexuality and feminism. In 1923, Millay was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*. In addition to publishing three plays in verse, Millay also wrote the libretto of one of the few American grand operas, *The King's Henchman*. <https://poets.org/poet/edna-st-vincent-millay>





## The Performers

**The Pandora Consort** is a new early music ensemble founded by young artists who are passionate about early music, **Kendra Comstock** and **Angie Tyler**. Both graduates of the Historical Performance Masters program at the Longy School of Music, Angie and Kendra have performed with many early music ensembles throughout New England, including the Boston Camerata, SoHIP Boston, Newton Baroque, Ensemble 44, Seven Times Salt, and the Concordia Consort. The Pandora Consort aims to reimagine classical music performance with multimedia, interactive performance, and exploring historically under-represented music. The Pandora Consort is particularly interested in performing rare works by female early music composers.

In the Summer of 2022, the Pandora Consort premiered their program *Vox Feminae* with SoHIP, featuring works by early female composers. Following their performance with SoHIP, the Pandora Consort hosted the first ever Worlds Collide Series, bringing together Boston-based emerging musicians across all genres to create original compositions and fundraise for Massachusetts charities of their choice.

This year, Pandora received a grant from the Anna Sosenko Assist Trust to perform *Vox Feminae* during the Boston Early Music Festival Fringe Series, and an Encouragement Award from the Mixtape Recital Series to support the development of a new program: *The Witching Hour*. The name comes from the myth of Pandora's box, and the human need to seek the unknown and echoes the mission of the ensemble to push the boundaries of what a classical concert is. [www.kendracomstocksoprano.com/pandora-consort](http://www.kendracomstocksoprano.com/pandora-consort)

Soprano **Gina Marie Falk** is a Boston-based chamber musician with a passion for both early and new music. She has received an MM in Vocal Performance from the Longy School of Music and a BM in Vocal Performance from East Carolina University. Some of Gina Marie's most recent engagements include Nightingale Vocal Ensemble's Winds of Change, singing with Emmanuel Music as part of their Cantata Series, and collaborating with pianist Clémentine Dubost to bring exciting, varied recitals to the Middlebury College School of French. Gina Marie continues her collaboration with young composers up and down the east coast of the US, premiering their works in both chamber and solo settings. Gina Marie enjoys exploring and programming the repertoire of both well-known and emerging contemporary composers such as John Harbison, Kaija Saariaho, Sarah Kirkland Snyder, John Zorn, Davis Martin, Iris Mowry, and John Secunde. Through performing early and new music in intimate and informal chamber settings, Gina Marie seeks to break down boundaries: making classical music an accessible and approachable art form for all people, musicians or otherwise. [www.ginamariefalk.com](http://www.ginamariefalk.com)

**Lea Peterson** is a Boston-based singer, music director, vocal arranger, and voice teacher. As a classically trained mezzo-soprano Lea has an active soloist and ensemble career as well as being a sought-after private voice coach, teaching artist, and conductor. Lea is currently the alto soloist at Hancock United in Lexington and previously sang at Christ Church Needham where she also revitalized the youth choir, functioning as its music director and conductor. She currently sings with Ensemble Lyrae, the Pandora Consort, and A Joyful Noyse, performing vocal chamber and choral works ranging from the baroque to modern day. Lea also performs as a solo act throughout the greater Boston area, singing pop and folk music at markets, bars, lounges, and events. Lea completed her M.M. in Vocal Studies at Longy School of Music of Bard College with a 4.0 GPA under studio teacher Pamela Dellal. She previously earned a B.A. in Music from Skidmore College, graduating summa cum laude with Honors in Music after only 3 years. [www.leapeterson.com](http://www.leapeterson.com)



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Don't miss our upcoming performance: Worlds Collide Showcase

