

- English version -

"What would it be like if a woman told her story from her own point of view?" - In this day and age of emancipation, free speech and thought in the Western world, this question is at the forefront as never before. Women always had to be „men“ in Lieder! Why? This question has been on our mind for a while and constantly surrounded by it when making music. Indemini Festival is led by women, conceived by women, and carried on women's shoulders and strength.

Hildegard von Bingen can be understood as a kind of lodestar of the middle ages, a foremother of feminism, a polymath whose expertise encompassed literary and musical composition, medicine, botany, and whose theological insight made her a trusted advisor to Pope Eugene III. Turning points, moments after which history flows in a different direction, can also be rightly regarded as beginnings. It is high time that female composers are represented in normal concert programmes, without the need for special dispensation or apology.

We wonder, for instance, how Schubert brilliantly describes the state of mind in Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel of a young girl who is experiencing her first love. The obsession, the restlessness, and the almost panicked joy; all without questioning how both he and Goethe, who wrote the words that breathe life into the song, represent a young woman. One has the feeling that something is missing.... not only the female voice to give the song a place to spin from, but also the woman at the center of the story. Her true voice was still missing for us.

This question is the focus of this project and theme for the 2022 festival, and the question leaves us wondering and exploring how our perspective can change our view of songs and their meanings. These women and their verses fill all dreams, stories told by women when given the space they need. As singers, we have always known that it is a huge task to express the female perspective in the songs and music we sing. To explore them entirely from an individual's own life experience and to find a corner of the piece that has not yet been fully explored; in a field dominated primarily by male composers, this idea was and is central to how we approach songs in a modern life today.

When we began to look at Clara Schumann, Rebecca Clarke, Nadia & Lili Boulanger, Fanny Hensel, Alma Mahler, Amy Beach, and forgotten Swiss female composer Fanny Hünérwadel, for the program, we felt we had found our clan. Women who had so much to say and not enough space in the world to say it all.

„Helvetia, the Female,“ a series of concerts dedicated in every aspect to the women of the world. The songs of the program are all meditations on life from a female point of view: love, fear, nature and self-image. Each woman has a strong and present style that sets her apart from the others, but their styles complement each other so perfectly that it feels like being in the middle of a conversation across generations. For us, this is a comfort; women's voices have always been part of our most treasured memories, and so it seems only right that women are at the center of our programming. We felt it was necessary to bring voices from the past, as well as from the present, into the conversation that is song and music.

Collaborating and sharing with the women artists this year, Zoey Zoley, Laure-Catherine Beyers, Jeanne-Michèle Charbonnet & Dasom Jeong is a true gift; witnessing their creative process is even more special. We talk to each other about stories, memories, hopes and fears, and it all culminates in beautiful works that really answer the question we hope we never stop asking: "What would it be like if a woman told her story from her own point of view?" When women take up space to tell their stories, they add a color to the world that lights up even the night. They illuminate their busy surroundings with a laser focus that is at once full of humour and heartbreaking admiration. They

prove to be immense, bold and brilliant. They show themselves to be strong women, courageous women, flawed women. Women who took what life gave them and created something wondrous, unexpected, filling it with every fibre of their willingly revealed souls. I hope that what we have created here will resonate with you, dear listeners.

I wonder what the hard working women here in this valley were singing when they were in the field, baking and cooking, carrying stones for the houses, picking chestnuts and berries, their main food sources. What were they singing when they were doing their washing in the Fontana (right next to the Festival stage) and all over the village? How were they women and able to express without boundaries .. something to think about, when we meet at the concerts this summer in Indemini. We are looking forward to seeing you then.

Luise Breyer-Aiton

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