

O Nobilissima Viriditas

for orchestra

3(II=af), III(pic), 3(II=ca), 3, 3 – 4, 3, 3, 1 – timp – perc (III: BD, crot, glsp, vib) – hp – cel(=pno) – str

12 minutes

Brooke Joyce (2014)

Commissioned and premiered by the Luther College Symphony Orchestra, Dan Baldwin, conductor
First performance at Luther College, November 2014

Program Note:

Many listeners know about Hildegard of Bingen through a wonderful recording made in 1993, *A Feather on the Breath of God*; readers of historical fiction may have also recently encountered Mary Sharratt's compelling novel *Illuminations*. Though she lived 900 years ago, Hildegard's star seems to be on the rise, and with good reason, for her biography and accomplishments are remarkable for any person of any age. She began her life as the companion of an anchoress in Disibodenberg, Germany. She was literally walled into a two-room cell in a church, where she remained for perhaps 25 years. That story in and of itself is amazing, but perhaps more amazing is the fact that Hildegard went on to live a full life as an abbess, theologian, artist, composer, and ecologist. As a way of honoring her rich body of work and perhaps communing with it on some level, I have decided to use one of her hymns, "O Nobilissima Viriditas" as the starting point for my piece. Below is the original Latin text along with a translation and the original medieval notation.

*O nobilissima viriditas,
quae radicas in sole,
et quae in candida serenitate lucet in rota,
quam nulla terrena excellentia comprehendis.
Tu circumdata es amplexibus divinarum
mysteriorum.
Tu rubes ut aurora,
et ardes ut solis flamma.*

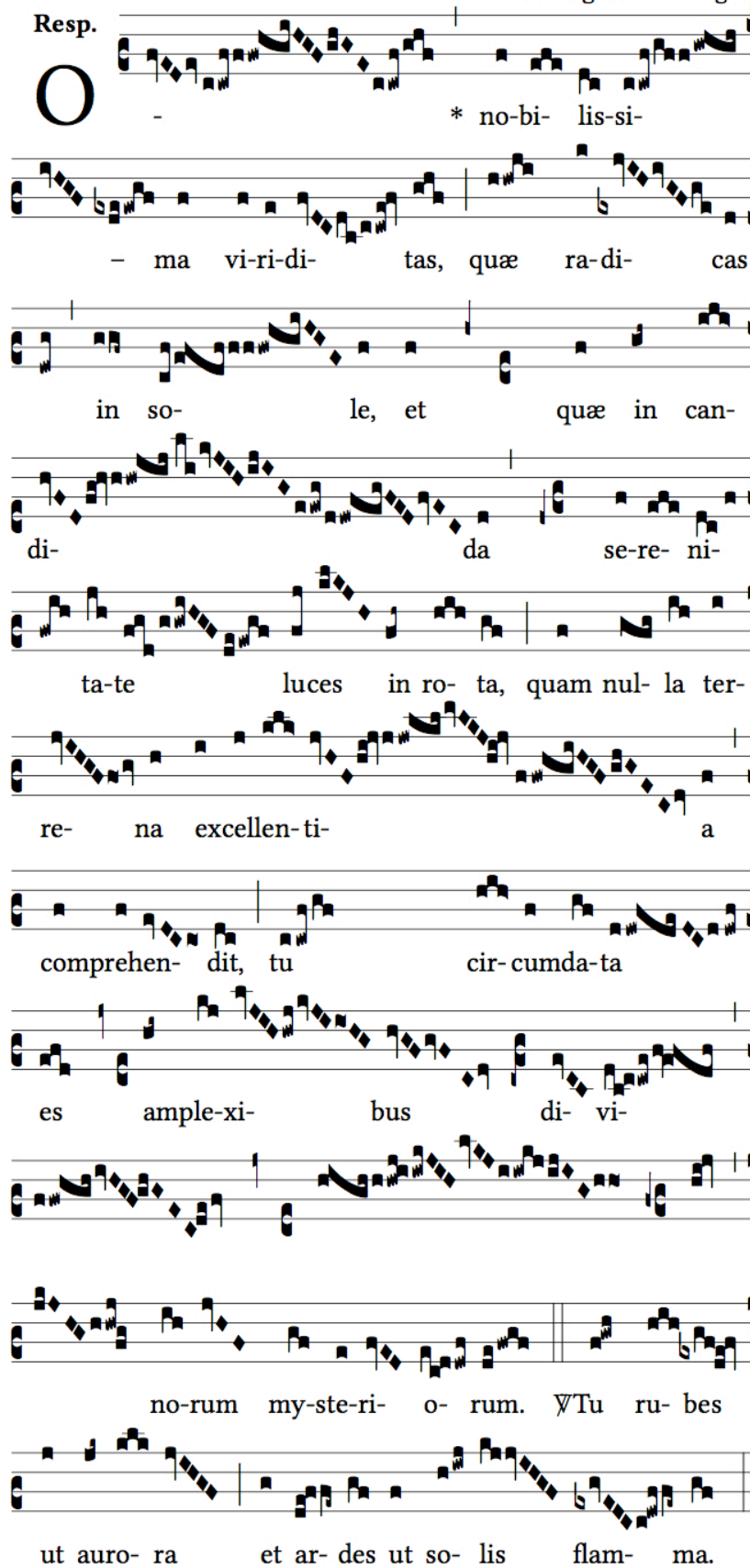
O most noble greening power,
rooted in the sun,
shining in dazzling serenity in a sphere
that no earthly excellence can comprehend.
You are enclosed in the embrace of divine
mysteries.
You blush like the dawn,
and burn like a flame of the sun.

My composition takes Hildegard's words as a starting point, creating a musical tapestry that weaves together sonic impressions of Hildegard's holistic theology with quotations of her music.

Hildegard von Bingen

Resp.

O



* no-bi- lis-si-
- ma vi-ri-di- tas, quæ ra-di- cas
in so- le, et quæ in can-
di- da se-re- ni-
ta-te luces in ro- ta, quam nul- la ter-
re- na ex-cel-len-ti- a
com-pre-hen- dit, tu cir-cum-da-ta
es ample-xi- bus di- vi-
no-rum my-ste-ri- o- rum. ¶ Tu ru- bes
ut auro- ra et ar- des ut so- lis flam- ma.