

Passion of the Holy Daughters

Here we have information about our cd "Passion of the Holy Daughters".

We greet you with the words from the Great Responsory sung for the honour of Mary Magdalene:

"R. The south wind blew and chased the northern breeze away and purified the heart of the remorseful Mary. The rain of the Holy Spirit and the word from heaven warmed and rejuvenated the woman who was lamenting inconsolably.

V. The strong current filled God's kingdom with joy. It warmed... Honour to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost."

Vox Silentii and the repertoire of sacred songs

Vox Silentii (Johanna Korhonen and Hilikka-Liisa Vuori) was established in 1992. The works performed by the duo are sacred songs or hymns that have been sung in the Christian church. Our voices bring us into contact with the invisible; the voice represents movements of the soul that transport us into a state of silence. At the same time the voice is also a physical experience " resonance in the body " and the unity we hear with our ears consists of a fundamental tone and its overtones. Modes are essentially scales. The modes we use are based on the Pythagorean concept of music and voice and the sounds that emanate from the overtones. In ancient church singing one can, in the best case, distinguish clear, often high-pitched, flute-like overtones sounds that nobody is actually "singing". We recorded this disc in Naantali Church; the space and acoustic that are present in the church itself combine with the human voice in these sacred songs. The works on the record are dedicated to women saints who lived in various epochs. These liturgical songs are about people's veneration of the saint and respect for her achievements. Women saints are used as role models in prayers, in daily life and in relation to various of life's choices. For us today, the songs offer an insight into the religious experiences of people of past times. We hope that the listener will become acquainted with the songs' subject, the women saints.

Saints are a part of the history of the Finnish church; their position during the period of Catholicism was significant. The songs on this disc have been preserved on parchment from generation to generation (the sources are given in brackets after each song). The majority of the manuscripts come from Finnish sources from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Ilkka Taitto has transcribed the songs for Vox Silentii, using the old manuscripts as his starting point except for songs Nos. 1 and 12, which were transcribed by Iégor Reznikoff, and Nos. 3 and 10, transcribed by Hilikka-Liisa Vuori, both similarly working from the manuscripts. Research on the women saints was done by Hilikka-Liisa Vuori, based on Ilkka Taitto's song sources, and Meri Heinonen has contributed historical information. The texts for the record were edited by Johanna Korhonen. We have also received valuable assistance from Alf Hårdelin (who translated the song texts into Swedish) and Teivas Oksala (who translated them into Finnish from Latin).

Johanna Korhonen and Hilikka-Liisa Vuori

The women saints and the chants

In the early stages of Christianity, it was usual to call everybody who was baptized and became a member of the Christian church a "saint". With saints, however, there has always been something else worth mentioning. When the persecutions experienced by Christians in the early days of the church ceased, saints were often martyrs, ascetics and evangelists. In some cases the saints existed only in legend; not all saints are historical figures. Because people were influenced significantly by story-telling, the characters in legends grew to assume a place among real people from the past.

Many of the women saints were clairvoyants and effective social manipulators. A common theme in their stories is the passion and love of Christ. Women had chosen to suffer and, like the Son of God, they suffered. To understand God's love, they sought out his misery and pain. Other aspects of the women's lives were the promise of heaven and a longing for liberation and resurrection.

The lives of the women saints have been characterized on one hand by the requirement for virginity, and on the other by the thought of living as a wife. The texts about wives can be regarded as symbols that relate to all mankind and that describe the spiritual growth of humanity: the bridegroom is Christ or God, and the bride is the human soul or the entire church. The nuns in the convent, like the Virgin Mary, are called brides of Christ. In the early mediæval period (from c. 850 to the thirteenth century) it was not unusual for the bride to be regarded in purely literal terms. It was then believed that Christian women, especially virgins, were also the brides of Christ in a physical sense. This idea gained extra momentum from the then prevalent desire to personify Jesus. In many religious guidebooks from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Jesus is described as an unsurpassed husband by comparison with mortal men. Christ was richer, more noble, more stylish and more loving than any other bridegroom. In his company no woman needed to fear childbirth or violent behaviour.

The songs of the women saints deal with a wide variety of emotions. The obverse of passion is always suffering.

The real matriarchs in the songs are St. Ann, St. Helena (or Helen) and St. Elizabeth. The great responsory (antiphon) *Beata mater Anna* celebrates Mary's mother, St. Ann. The rejoicing about the matriarch is loud and clear. The song comes from the Bridgettine Sisters' prayers on Wednesday mornings. In the text we also notice that an opinion is being expressed: here Mary's unblemished conception is stressed one of the most controversial theological topics of the period.

In Finland St. Ann has always been a popular saint, to whom national qualities have also been assigned: she was not only the mother of God but also the mistress of the forest, Annikki. The first mention of St. Ann in Finland was in 1398. Her saint's day has generally been observed on 21st November, but in Finland the date has been 15th December, which, according to fifteenth-century reckoning, was the shortest day in Finland, i.e. one of the four important sun-related events during the year.

(Source: A84 f. 22r-v.)

During the early mediæval period Saint Helena, from western Gotland, was one of the champions of Christianity in Sweden. In the late twelfth century she was canonized and, in the late thirteenth century, a special festive liturgy was written in her memory. The Alleluia melody *Helena Uesgocie* is drawn from this liturgy. Helena's saint's day was celebrated on 31st July. Of noble birth, Helena concentrated on charitable work; she was widowed at an early age and thereafter led a devout life. This song is characterized by archaic beauty and strength.

(Source: Graduale Aboense, ca. 1397-1406, Helsinki University Library, F.M. II No. 44 f. 28r-v.)

The Alleluia *Spes datur* describes how Mary visits Elizabeth at a time when both are pregnant; here a very young mother meets an older mother. In the song we observe a passage describing Elizabeth's humility: the entire tonal landscape and the atmosphere created by the specified mode are very delicate. The song comes from the music for the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady, observed on 2nd July. The Feast of the Visitation represents a relatively new phase in the history of Catholic liturgy. The *Spes datur* Alleluias have an unusual melody for a Feast of the Visitation, for which only a few sources in Finland are known.

(Source: Helsinki University Library, Aö II 41 (1518) f. 125r.)

Mary is one of the most popular and best-known of all women saints. One of the most tender songs on this disc is *Stabat iuxta*, in which the simple form of the melody is the vehicle for a passion, a suffering. In the Middle Ages the Virgin Mary's grief over her son's suffering and death gave rise to a veritable cult of compassion. This cult had its own mass and prayer hour that followed a specific daily routine, and the sequence (an early version of the hymn) *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem* is taken from this. In the hymn the mother's grief is tangible and it may seem surprising that, at the end of the piece, we ask Mary to "give us happiness", despite all the pain.
(Source: Helsinki University Library, uncatalogued manuscript fragment from the 15th century)

The introit (introduction to the psalm of the day) *Salve sancta parens* is mild and bright in character. In the song we greet Mary as the mother of God. This song was used to introduce the mass held every week from Candlemas until Advent.
(Source: Graduale Aboense, Helsinki University Library, F.M. II No. 44 f. 41r.)

In the festive masses held in honour of the Virgin Mary, special tropes could also be used, i.e. interpolated verses. In this case some opinions about the Virgin Mary and her position as an intercessor for mankind have been added to the Gloria, which is a standard text, unchanged throughout the ages. The first additional section begins with the words "per precem piissimam" ("with most devout prayer"). These tropes were an extremely important form of poetry in the Middle Ages. The melody is from the mediæval songbook of the church in Ilmajoki.
(Source: Helsinki University Library, AÖ II 55 (from the turn of the 16th century) f. 146v-147v.)

The responsory *Flavit auster* is set in a eulogistic mode. Mary Magdalene, called by the church father Augustine "the apostles apostle", is one of the most important women in the Christian tradition. She was a leading figure among the early disciples of Jesus. Mary went up to Jerusalem together with Jesus; she was present at the events in Golgotha and she was the first to see the resurrected Jesus. Of all the saints, it is believed that it was Mary Magdalene "she who gave women the right to express themselves" who had the gift of tears and of repentance, a gift that brought people closer to God. In this song the atmosphere is wholly in keeping with the text: abundantly flowing water. The feeling of repentance is tender and light. This responsory was sung twice in the context of Mary Magdalene's prayer hour, on the evening of 21st July and early the next morning. As late as the end of the sixteenth century, a mediæval melody was used in Finland for songs about Mary Magdalene. In the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala, she is called Matalena.
(Source: Åbo Akademi, Tammelas antifonarium f. 183)

The hymn *Nobilis et pulchra*, dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria, is one of the most sorrowful pieces on this record. According to legend Catherine was a well-educated and beautiful woman who demonstrated her wisdom in discussions with heathen philosophers. In particular she is the patron saint of theologians and philosophers. In Finland during the Middle Ages, Catherine was also held in high regard; her saint's day was celebrated in late November. According to the available documentary evidence Catherine, who was seen as a wise martyr saint, was held in particular esteem by the bishops in Turku and in the cathedral chapter, who praised her in their devotional exercises.
(Source: Karislojo antifonarium 82v-83r.)

This record includes four hymns in which bridal mystery, suffering and longing assume a central place: *Audi filia*, *Veni electa*, *Nigra sum* and *Ante thorum*. Each hymn is characterized by a unique atmosphere. In the Alleluia from the Mass for St. Cecilia *Audi filia* the daughter, i.e. the human soul, is urged to listen and to see. It is believed that Cecilia lived in Rome during the third century;

she died for her faith and has been seen as the special protectress of church musicians. According to various sources, masses were already being celebrated in her honour in the fourth century. According to the work *Speculum Virginium*, which was customarily read specifically to women in the Middle Ages: "Christ is looking for open ears; he longs for open eyes. In this way that which the voice brings will stay within you, and that which you see will bear fruit in your mind." *Audi filia* is notated in the French St. Michel de Albin's gradual from the middle of the eleventh century. The pitch of the version recorded here is an interpretation by Prof. Iégor Reznikoff. (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, manuscript BN Lat. 776)

The Alleluia melody *Veni electa mea* was sung in the Middle Ages in the context of masses dedicated to various women saints, such as Priscilla, Martha or Catherine. Priscilla was a member of the early Roman Church and may also have been married to Paul's pupil Aquila. Her feast is observed on 18th January. The feast of Martha, the conscientious sister of Lazarus and Mary, is celebrated on 29th July. Martha has generally been seen as the protectress of housewives. The song text is found in a mass book from the eighth century. The message is powerful and convincing, as the order comes from the king. The melody is from Uskela's mass songbook (i.e. gradual). (Source: Helsinki University Library, Aö II 41 (1518) f. 157v.)

Nigra sum is a tender song: the singer's soul is described as "black, but comely". The short antiphon *Nigra sum* comes from the early Middle Ages and is always associated with church service rituals. The text is based on Solomon's Song of Songs. The Alleluia setting is by Iégor Reznikoff, composed in the style of traditional hymns. (Source: Hartkers antifonarium)

The unusual sequence *Ante thorum* is from the Mass for St. Barbara, whose feast is observed on 4th December. According to legend, Barbara's father locked her in a tower to protect her from her suitors. Barbara (who lived in the third or fourth century) converted to Christianity and suffered a martyr's death for her faith. In the song the bride is hopeful and eager; the human soul is languishing and pining away. The mood of the song is exalted, even enraptured. The song comes from the so-called *Codex Cumoensis* manuscript from Kokemäki, which was destroyed in the fire that broke out at the rectory in Kokemäki in 1918; luckily a copy had been made. (Source: Turku University Library, the so-called *Codex Cumoensis*, early 16th century, f. 56r-557r.)

In two songs we encounter heaven and heavenly splendour. The responsory *Vidi ciuitatem* sung on the morning of 1st November, just after the reading. The piece has been known at least since the ninth century, from which time the earliest surviving manuscripts date. The song expresses a longing for heaven. (Source: Helsinki University Library, uncatalogued manuscript fragment from the 13th century)

The Alleluia setting *Post Octo Dies* is a gem. This song captures the entire message of the gospel: the resurrected Christ stands among us. The song has survived in a Franco-Roman version in an old Roman gradual (Vat. Lat. 5319, ca. 1050-1150). It probably came to Finland at the very beginning of the Christian era, and it is found in a number of Finnish manuscripts, among them in Turku Cathedral Chapter's mass book *Missale Aboense* (1488). The piece was sung during the main service on the first Sunday after Easter (*dominica in albis depositis*).

Sources for the text:

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1. *Alleluia. Helena Alleluia!*

Helena, Western Götland's pride and protector,
Pray for us today for the gifts of mercy. Alleluia!

2. *Flavit auster* R. The south wind blew and chased the northern breeze away and purified the heart of the remorseful Mary.

The rain of the Holy Spirit and the word from heaven warmed and rejuvenated the woman who was lamenting inconsolably.

V. The strong current filled God's kingdom with joy. It warmed? Honour to the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Word?

3. *Beata mater Anna*

Blessed mother Anna, ark of the eternal King,

In you He has preserved the treasure that is dearest to him,

His legacy to his only begotten Son,

Who became the richness of the poor

And the liberation of the poor prisoners.

Rejoice, o revered mother, about a yet more revered daughter:

As a virgin she bore Him

Who created everything. And the liberation of the poor prisoners.

4. *Ante thorum* Here before the virgin bridal bed we sing a special song about the corn sheaf. May we worship her as a victor, but imitate her as an adversary, she who is virgin in spirit. She is the truth's new combatant, who thirsts for justice. Be greeted, you mistress over the flesh, bearer of the oil lamp filled to the brim, when you go to meet your bridegroom. She walks across the flowers and dry grass of the lanes, full of scorn for that which is vain. She is looking for the bridegroom's face, and for the sake of his beauty she will preserve her purity.

Oh, what shame it is for the bearded ones, who are tormented by sins and submit to the enemy, when this tender woman fights against the flesh and tramples the enemy under her feet.

For the sake of love's arrows Christ pierced her, and no medicine will heal the wound until she has reached her chosen one she has earned the right to lie upon his pure bed.

The Virgin Mother does not know who the bridegroom is, and nor does the woman.

The Father alone admired his beauty. To this bridegroom the happy young woman is bound, and she is approaching her true rest.

Be greeted, o Virgin, who may attend the Lamb's wedding feast and eternal happiness. Let us too through our prayers be filled with the mercy of which you possess a surfeit. O Jesus, let us enjoy your glance through the prayers of your bride. Rejoice, Mary, o happy one, about your devout daughter-in-law, and for us in heavenly bliss.

Amen.

5. *Vidi civitatem*

I saw Jerusalem, the holy city,
Adorned and praised by the prayers of the devout. (cf. Rev. 21: 2)
And there the holy martyrs sing
The new song. Alleluia.
Lord, you are surrounded by a light
That shall never be extinguished.
There you have built the light's radiant dwellings. And there the martyrs [etc.]

6. *Alleluya. Spes datur omni populo Mariam mox inuocare videnti hanc Elizabeth humiliter visitare. Alleluia.*

A hope was given to all people,
When Elizabeth humbly greeted Mary
Whom she saw visiting [her house].

7. *Alleluya. Audi filia Alleluia!*

Hear, o daughter, and pay heed
And bend hither your ear,
For the king has come to desire your beauty. (cf. Ps. 45: 11-12)
(Cecilia)

8. *Alleluya. Veni, electa mea Alleluia!*

Come, my chosen one, I will place you on my throne,
For the king has come to desire your beauty. (cf. Ps. 45: 11-12) (Priscilla, Martha, Catherine)

9. *Salve, sancta parens* Hail, holy mother, you who bore a King,
Who rules eternally over heaven and earth.
Alleluia.

After you bore Him you remained an unblemished virgin.
Mother of God, pray for us.

10. *Nobilis et pulchra* Noble and beautiful and wise is the virgin Catherine.

She burns with divine love,
She despises the transient joy that the world gives us.
A king was her own father, her mother a queen,
[But she, Catherine,] burns with divine love.

11. *Stabat iuxta Christi crucem*

She stood close by the cross, saw the true light suffer, the mother of the King of us all.
She saw the thorn-crowned head, the pierced side, she saw her Son die.
She saw the body scourged, hands and feet drilled though, subjugated by the cruel,
She saw his head bowed down, his whole body bloody, the shepherd's [body sacrificed] for the sheep.
She saw the drink mixed with vinegar, her only begotten Son crucified, he who governs all.
The mother and daughter saw how Christ had to endure blows, she saw the ignominy [he had to suffer].
The Virgin witnessed her innocent Son saying: "Woman, behold thy son".
The Virgin witnessed her suffering son saying: "It is finished", and how the spear pierced his side.

The good mother saw her Son die with pain, a pain which " the saints maintain " was greater than that of a thousand martyrs.

Mild Virgin, good Virgin, you who are the hope and way to life of those burdened by sins,
Virgin full of grace, hasten to pray to the Son for those who serve you
And may He give us joy. Amen. (For the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary)

12. *Nigra sum*

I am black, but comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem. (Song of Songs 1: 5)
Therefore the king came to love me
And led me into his chamber. Alleluia.

13. *Gloria in excelsis* (an extended form of the Gloria from the Ordinary of the Mass) Glory in the highest to God. And on earth peace to men of good will.

We praise thee. We bless thee. We worship thee. We glorify thee.

Thanks we give to thee because of thy great glory.

Lord God, King of heaven, God Father almighty.

Lord Son only begotten, Jesus Christ.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of Father.

Who take away sins of world, have mercy on us.

For the sake of the most merciful intercession of your mother, the Virgin Mary,

Who take away sins of world, receive our supplication.

So that we may ever please you and your holy mother, the Virgin Mary.

Who sit at right hand of Father, have mercy on us.

For the sake of Mary's intercession, she who is your son's mother and daughter,

For thou alone art holy, Mary alone the virgin mother,

Thou alone Lord, Mary alone mistress,

Thou alone most high, Mary's Father and Son, Jesus Christ, With the Holy Spirit in glory of God the Father. Amen.

14. *Alleluia. Post dies octo* Alleluia!

After eight days, the doors being shut,

Jesus stood in the midst of his disciples, and said: Peace be unto you. (cf. John 20: 26)

These texts are from the cd - booklet *Passio Sanctarum Filiarum* (Proprius 2006)