

Luminous Awakening

(from *Pure Light beyond Light*)

Hildegard von Bingen

SSAA a cappella



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

Holy Spirit, breath of every being,
root of every creature,
moving in all,
bathing all lives
with forgiveness and grace,
and caressing wounds
with the balm of boundless joy –
Pure light beyond light,
luminous awakening,
radiant, bountiful,
resurrecting everything
again and again and again.

Hildegard of Bingen

Translation© 2016 by Elizabeth Alexander

Luminous Awakening (SATB) is the second movement of Elizabeth Alexander's *a cappella* work *Pure Light Beyond Light: Three Invocations of the Holy*. The texts, spanning different times, places and religious traditions, each express mystery and devotion through the imagery of light, fire and radiance.

Pure Light Beyond Light

Three Invocations of the Holy

Complete SATB work: SEA-133-00

I. Hear Us O Never-Failing Light (Mozarabic blessing)

2-4 part choir: SEA-134-00

II. Luminous Awakening (Hildegard von Bingen)

SATB: SEA-135-00

SSAA: SEA-135-01

III. Holy One, Source of Radiance and Reason (Rob Eller-Isaacs)

SATB or 2-5 part canon: SEA



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Luminous Awakening

SSAA a cappella

Hildegard von Bingen
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Warmly, expansively (♩ = 52-60)

pp

S Ho - ly Spir - it, breath of ev'-ry be - ing, root of ev'-ry crea - ture, mov - ing in all. Ho - ly

A O breath of ev'-ry be - ing, root of ev'-ry crea - ture, mov - ing in all.

O breath of ev'-ry be - ing, root of ev'-ry crea - ture, mov - ing in all.

O, root of ev'-ry crea - ture, mov - ing in all. Ho - ly

5

S Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly

A Bath - ing all lives with for - give-ness and grace, Ho - ly Spir - - it, Ho - ly

Bath - ing all lives, with for - give-ness and grace, Ho - ly Spir - - it, Ho - ly

Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it Ho - ly Spir - - it, Ho - ly

8 *mp*
 S Spir - it, And ca - ress - ing wounds, and ca - ress - ing wounds with the
 S Spir - - it, And ca - ress - ing wounds, and ca - ress - ing wounds with the
 A Spir - - it, And ca - ress - ing wounds, and ca - ress - ing wounds with the
 A Spir - - it, And ca - ress - ing wounds, and ca - ress - ing wounds with the

11 *mf* *p intimately*
 S balm of bound - less joy. Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly
 S balm of bound - less joy. Ho - ly Spir - - it, Ho - ly Spir - - - it,
 A balm of bound - less joy. Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - - - it,
 A balm of bound - less joy. Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly

15

molto cresc. *mf*

S light, lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, boun - ti - ful, lu -

molto cresc. *mf*

Pure light be - yond light, lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, ra - dia - ant, boun - ti - ful,

molto cresc. *mf*

A light, lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, ra - dia - ant, boun - ti - ful,

light, lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, ra - dia - ant, boun - ti - ful,

18

f

S - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, re - sur - rect - ing ev' - ry - thing a - gain and a - gain and a - gain.

f

lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, re - sur - rect - ing ev' - ry - thing a - gain and a - gain and a - gain.

f

A lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, re - sur - rect - ing ev' - ry - thing a - gain and a - gain and a - gain.

f

lu - mi - nous a - wak - en - ing, a - gain and a - gain and a - gain.

Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) was a German nun, theologian, writer, composer, mystic and *magistra*, or spiritual teacher, who founded and led convents in Rupertsburg and Eibingen. Her plainsong settings of chants, with both original and liturgical texts, were composed for the use of her fellow nuns. Recent decades have brought a resurgent interest in her music, along with thousands of publications, performances and recordings.

Composer Note: My first setting of Hildegard von Bingen’s *Spiritus Sanctus Vivificans* used an English translation by a well-known translator of spiritual writings. I was deep in the throes of composition and under a tight deadline, so it somehow failed to register with me that a modern translation of Hildegard’s ancient words would be copyrighted material! Realizing that later, I felt pretty foolish – but not nearly as foolish as I would feel when, after months of haggling, the translator’s publisher offered me a “generous” non-renewable 5-year contract for an exorbitant fee.

I headed back to the drawing board to see if there was an easy remedy to this quandary, but I had no luck. Substituting the original Latin text into my setting was a fruitless endeavor, and neither of the other two English translations I dug up managed to capture the music’s sense of movement and grace.

I was close to giving up on the song altogether when I had a revelation: Why couldn’t I create my *own* translation? I had studied Latin for a few years in high school, and I have plenty of experience writing and adapting lyrics. When I created a word-for-word translation of Hildegard’s prayer and compared it with the three English versions, I understood immediately what qualities I wanted to invoke. Hildegard’s writing is about the Holy Spirit being not only a steadfast root but also a *dynamic presence*. My guiding principle for the translation became *flow*, an eternally moving and changing breath. As I immersed myself in Hildegard’s original words and crafted my own translation, I set out to make each word invite the listener into the next word, and the next, and the next.

If you're curious about Hildegard's own plainsong setting of *Spiritus Sanctus Vivificans*, it has been transcribed by a number of musicologists in both plainchant and modern notation:

Traditional plainchant notation by Jürgen Knuth,
contributed to the Werner Icking Music Archive
and distributed by the International Music Score Library Project.

Knuth's transcription is covered under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license
[http://imslp.org/wiki/Symphonia_et_Ordo_virtutum_\(Hildegard\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Symphonia_et_Ordo_virtutum_(Hildegard))

Modern music notation by Beverly R. Lomer,
available through the International Society for Hildegard von Bingen Studies

Lomer's transcription is made available to all "for the study and appreciation of Hildegard"
<http://www.hildegard-society.org/2014/11/spiritus-sanctus-vivificans-antiphon.html>

Links to the above sources are also available at
www.seafarerpress.com/works/luminous-awakening



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