

## ADELAIDE FESTIVAL 2020 REVIEW: THE FEMALE VOICE

**Soprano Bethany Hill again impressed with the beauty of her voice, and gestures were used to great effect in this celebration of music by female composers.**

Peter Burdon, *The Advertiser*



**The Female Voice  
FESTIVAL – Classical Music  
UKARIA Cultural Centre  
March 8**

What better way to celebrate International Women’s Day than with a concert of music entirely by female composers? Furthermore, women who lived hundreds of years ago. *The Female Voice* celebrated the music of four of these remarkable people.

The north of Italy was fertile territory for women composers. In the 16th century Francesca Caccini was already performing at the Medici court at the age of 15. The secular aria *Se muove a giurar fede*, sacred madrigal *Maria, dolce Maria*, and the hymn *Jesu corona Virginum* are among the few pieces that survive of a large output, and what treasures they are.

Soprano Bethany Hill again impressed with the beauty of her voice, though clear unfamiliarity with the music – eyes glued to the score – meant the elegant use of gesture went for nothing without eye contact.

Hill was more confident in three pieces by the better-known Barbara Strozzi. In the first, the arietta *Pensaci ben mio core* (from the splendidly titled *Opus 7, Diporti di Euterpe*), vocal techniques and gesture were used to great effect in the dramatic text. *Udite amanti* (titled *L’Eraclito amoroso*) is a small cantata which uses a short ground bass to great effect, and *La mia donna* (*La sol fa mi re do*) is downright cheeky, referring none too obliquely to a woman who “sings” only for money! In 1651!

Instrumental interludes by the splendid Ludovico’s Band were from the nun Isabella Leonardo, who never left her monastery, composing sublime music for

the glory of God alone. The concert was book-ended by two of the passionate sacred works of Hildegard of Bingen, played offstage by baroque oboist Ben Opie.