



Wild Up

• **The Interior Castle**

Music

June 6

8 PM

WILD↑↑

CaLARTS

REDCAT

**ROY AND EDNA DISNEY
CALARTS THEATER**

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

GRAMMY-nominated orchestral collective Wild Up presents *The Interior Castle*, an evening of ecstatic and contemplative music inspired by visionary women, most of them cloistered, who span centuries of artistic and spiritual inquiry. Structured in ritornello form, the program centers on four works by Ethiopian composer, pianist, and nun Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru, alongside new music by LA-based experimental vocalist and composer Eliza Bagg—including the world premiere of an original work and two reimaginings of the medieval abbess and polymath Hildegard von Bingen’s visionary chants. The program concludes with a world premiere by Wild Up member M.A. Tiesenga, inspired by St. Teresa of Ávila’s mystical treatise *The Interior Castle*. The program reclaims devotional music as a site of radical interiority and resistance to external forces. Through mazes of sound and reflection, *The Interior Castle* honors nuns, mystics, and seekers who turned inward to challenge the norms of their time and remake the world. Their restlessness endures today, recalling that an interior life can shape a collective one when listening becomes a form of devotion and attention a means of liberation.

PROGRAM

Emahoy Tsege Mariam GEBRU: *The Mad Man's Laughter*

Hildegard VON BINGEN: *O presul vere civitatis* arr. Bagg

Eliza BAGG: *The True City* (World Premiere)

Emahoy Tsege Mariam GEBRU: *The Song of the Sea*

Isabella LEONARDA: *Sonata Quinta*

Isabella LEONARDA: *Sonata Decima*

Emahoy Tsege Mariam GEBRU: *The Homeless Wanderer*

M.A. TIESENGA: *The Interior Castle* (World Premiere)

Emahoy Tsege Mariam GEBRU: *Ballad of the Spirits*

Wild Up

Vicki Ray, *piano*

Eliza Bagg, *voice/composer/arranger*

M.A. Tiesenga, *composer*

Mingjia Chen, *voice*

Kathryn Shuman, *voice*

Adrienne Pope, *violin*

Mona Tian, *violin*

Linnea Powell, *viola*

Derek Stein, *cello*

Marlon Martinez, *bass*

Allen Fogle, *horn*

Dan Rosenboom, *trumpet*

mattie barbier, *trombone*

Archie Carey, *bassoon*

Christopher Rountree, *artistic director/conductor*

Produced in collaboration with Wild Up

Production and lighting design by Brian Sea

Additional lighting design by Chu-Hsuan Chang

Sound design and additional production design by Lewis Pesacov

The Interior Castle was organized by Christopher Rountree, Artistic Director, and Elizabeth Cline, Executive Director, and produced by Brian Sea, Production Director, with Linnea Powell, Personnel Manager, and Alitzah Oros, Digital Content Manager, Wild Up.

Emahoy's legacy is the Emahoy Tsege Mariam Music Foundation, a self-financed non-profit that funds music education programs in Ethiopia and the U.S.

The Interior Castle is made possible through the generous support of Ruth Gilliland and Arthur Rieman. Wild Up at REDCAT is supported in part by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles; The Amphion Foundation, Inc.; New Music USA's Organization Fund (2025–26); the Performance Program of The Aaron Copland Fund for Music; and the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia University. With special thanks to Thomas Feng.

THE INTERIOR CASTLE

“The soul will not enjoy it alone. ”

—St. Teresa of Ávila

When composers devote their music to God, to prayer, to a community of the faithful, the offering returns as revelation. A self-portrait was never the intention. And yet work made in relation to the divine image becomes the most precise one we have: not the self displayed, but disclosed — shaped by what exceeds it, revealed by what it gives itself to, transformed by what it serves.

St. Teresa of Ávila’s own portrait, the mystical text *The Interior Castle*, imagines the soul as a radiant castle with many rooms, each leading further inward toward transformation and surrender. Written in 1577 as a guide to Catholic prayer and contemplative life, it has endured because its central image speaks powerfully beyond itself. The castle Teresa built is restless, digressive, full of false starts and sudden illuminations. The prose wanders through the castle the way the soul does, yearningly and haltingly, finding unexpected rooms. She bent her entire life toward God, and in doing so left behind the shape of her mind.

This program follows that inward search across nearly a thousand years through Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), Isabella Leonarda (1620–1704), Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru (1923–2023), and contemporary LA-based composers and performers Eliza Bagg and M.A. Tiesenga. The evening moves like a ritornello, returning to

Emahoy's music between the other voices. Her works become the thresholds: moments of re-entry into the castle.

Cloistered composers wrote from within a life set apart, where composition bears the traces of the rooms and rituals from which it emerged. Hildegard of Bingen's voice rose from the stone world of the Benedictine cell, from the chant-filled hours and ordered rhythms of prayer. Enclosure gave the voice pressure and shape, until what is contained opens outward into rapture. Isabella Leonarda composed within the rigorous life of the Ursuline convent in Baroque Italy. Composition gathered quietly at the margins of the day, becoming something beyond the language of duty and obedience.

Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru's music carries echoes of Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy — chant, prayer, and sacred song — alongside traces of Western classical study and Ethiopian melodic language. Emahoy worked under conditions at once monastic and modern: in exile, in austerity, late at night. What is held inward long enough takes the shape of its waiting, music that arrives already slowed by everything it has survived.

In *The True City*, Eliza Bagg responds to Hildegard's *O presul vere civitas*, a hymn to the "true city of God." Drawing on her deep relationship with sacred music and Hildegard's performance history, Bagg meets the medieval source as a living conversation, reimagining its distant heavenly city as an inward refuge. The nun's voice carries the faithful toward God; *The True City* turns that devotional attention toward the fragile sanctuaries we build and tend together.

M.A. Tiesenga's world premiere, *The Interior Castle*, enters Teresa's text through its sensuality and force: the desperate longing for union with God, the passage from „spiritual aridity“ to ecstatic presence, and the insistence on pain as a path toward transcendence. Drawing on Teresa's own words alongside other sung liturgical sources, Tiesenga thinks gesturally as much as textually, tracing the contours of Teresa's consecrated life and her journey through the seven mansions of the soul. Bernini's sculpture famously makes Teresa's ecstasy visible through the body; Tiesenga's music listens for its charge from within.

Are we drawn to the lives and music of Christian nuns, saints, and mystics because of the drama of devotion — the way belief can organize and consume? Or because cloistered life offers another possibility: a space to cultivate self-knowledge? The convent is not freedom in any simple sense; its separateness could be restrictive, its disciplines exacting. But withdrawal from the world could also suspend the demand to be legible to it, making room for forms of self-determined and communal power difficult to claim elsewhere.

A self allowed to gather in quiet can return to the world differently: more attentive, more receptive. Inwardness is not separate from collective life; it is one of its deepest conditions. Tonight, we enter this concert as a temporary chapel, in silence, theatrical and reverent. When the music begins, it reaches us privately, and yet we are immediately placed in relation. “The soul will not enjoy it alone.” We listen with others, through others, and toward others.

In our shared listening, the castle becomes an architecture of attention, built through practice — a place where the self grows more capable of meeting what lies beyond it. We do not return to the castle to close the door on the world, but to listen deeply enough that more doors might open when we go back out.

— Elizabeth Cline

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Wild Up is a multi-Grammy-nominated LA-based orchestra collective that uplifts people and projects, leading the way for music-making today. Called “a raucous, grungy, irresistibly exuberant ... fun-loving, exceptionally virtuosic family” (*The New York Times*), Wild Up has been lauded as one of music’s most exciting groups by virtually every significant institution and critic within earshot. Artistic Director Christopher Rountree started the group in 2010 to eschew outdated ensemble and concert traditions by experimenting with different methodologies, approaches, and contexts.

After a decade and a half of rampant creativity and curiosity, Wild Up is the ambassador of West Coast music. The group has collaborated with a wide range of composers, performers, and cultural institutions, premiering and creating hundreds of new works. They partnered with the LA Phil and REDCAT to present a two-month-long festival and gallery exhibition *To The Fullest: The Music of Arthur Russell and Julius Eastman*, accompanied Björk at Goldenvoice’s FYF Fest, sung into a Picasso with Pamela Z at LACMA, and created

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Democracy Sessions—playing against growing autocracy with Raven Chacon, Ted Hearne, Chana Porter, Ursula K. LeGuin, Harmony Holiday, Saul Williams, and Karlheinz Stockhausen at MOCA. They premiered David Lang and Mark Dion’s *Anatomy Theater* at LA Opera, often collaborated with the Martha Graham Dance Company, and performed scores for *Under the Skin* by Mica Levi and *Punch-Drunk Love* by Jon Brion at the Regent Theater and Ace Hotel. The group has been praised by *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *NPR*, and *Pitchfork*, among many other publications and critics. | wildup.org

M.A. Tiesenga is a multi-instrumentalist and sound artist currently residing in Los Angeles. Tiesenga specializes in saxophone work and improvisation, balancing virtuosity with creativity. Tiesenga is a prolific and dedicated proponent of new music and interdisciplinary collaborations, maintaining a diverse career spanning experimental music, soul, pop, jazz, classical, and session recording. They have been seen making music at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Hollywood Bowl, on TV, in caves, and in remote pastures. Tiesenga’s creative collaborations include work with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Wild Up, Ojai Music Festival, Bang On A Can All-Stars, Monday Evening Concerts, Civic Orchestra of Chicago, High Desert Soundings, Brightwork New Music, WasteLAnd, Théâtre Musical Tokyo, Long Beach Opera, Kunsthalle for Music, SPEAK Percussion, Ensemble Ipse, Dog Star Orchestra, Ung Nordisk Musik, Ensemble

Supermusique, and ensembles at the Eastman School of Music, New England Conservatory, California Institute for the Arts, Yale University, and Darmstädter Ferienkurse.

Eliza Bagg is an experimental vocalist and composer, performing boundary-pushing work around the globe from the Concertgebouw to Carnegie Hall. She is known for her “ethereal” aesthetic (*The New York Times*), “luminous sound” (*The New York Times*), and “gossamer” singing (*The New Yorker*), with a unique sound and improvisational practice. As a renowned collaborator, Bagg frequently develops new work with composers, including avant-garde luminaries such as Meredith Monk and John Zorn, and has premiered pieces by Ellen Reid with the New York Philharmonic, Ted Hearne at Carnegie Hall, and Chaya Czernowin at Walt Disney Concert Hall. She has sung lead roles in new operas at institutions ranging from the Komische Oper Berlin to the Prototype Festival, soloed with major symphonies including the Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and Los Angeles Philharmonic, and is a member of the GRAMMY-winning vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth. Bagg’s compositional work integrates contemporary pop aesthetics with classical languages, historical forms, and an avant-garde sensibility. Bagg tours globally under the artist name Lisel and has performed her innovative work for processed voice and electronics at institutions such as Lincoln Center, Big Ears Festival, November Festival, Birds of Paradise Festival, Musica Festival Strasbourg, De Doelen, and the Prototype Festival, among others.

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UPCOMING AT REDCAT

JUN 11 - 13: Shayok Misha Chowdhury: *RHEOLOGY*

In *RHEOLOGY*, Obie Winner Shayok Misha Chowdhury joins forces with his physicist mother, Bulbul Chakraborty. Bulbul is obsessed with the physics of sand: how it flows like a liquid but then jams into a solid. Misha is obsessed with his mother. But they're running out of time. In this boundary-pushing collaboration, mother and son challenge each other to a high-stakes experiment.

JUN 26 - 27: PARTCH Ensemble: *Bewitching Petals*

PARTCH Ensemble—the Grammy Award-winning ensemble specializing in the music of the iconoclastic composer Harry Partch—debuts newly constructed, custom-built replicas of instruments designed by Partch in their annual survey of his music.

JUL 18 - 19: Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (LACO) and MPA:

Yoko Ono's Sky Piece to Jesus Christ + Cut Piece

The Broad and REDCAT present two stagings of Yoko Ono's iconic performances in conjunction with The Broad's special exhibition, *Yoko Ono: Music of the Mind*. *Sky Piece to Jesus Christ* (1965), performed by Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (LACO), features a six-piece classical music ensemble being slowly wrapped in gauze until the musicians can no longer play their instruments. *Cut Piece* (1964), performed by artist MPA, invites the audience to cut away pieces of the artist's clothing while the artist sits silently onstage.

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Deck: Christa Troester

Lighting Operator: Jerrel Milan

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