On a recent warm, summer afternoon, members of local chamber choir Sine Nomine could be found at the Temple of Music in Roger Williams Park enjoying an annual summer picnic. These singers love music so much, they took advantage of that opportunity by offering a spontaneous concert of choral music to onlookers and passers by.

What made this impromptu performance so special was the type of music Sine Nomine sings. The public has become accustomed to associating “flash mobs” with humorously entertaining diversions from an otherwise ordinary day. But this group opened a window to another time with their voices. The music they specialize in is hundreds of years old and the texts are usually in Latin. Those at the park that day were unwittingly exposed to some of the finest sacred music of the Renaissance, expertly sung by these passionate musicians.

Sine Nomine is entering its nineteenth year of making music. In this time, the group has been known to reach even further back than the Renaissance Era for their inspiration. A quote from recently canonized Saint Hildegard von Bingen, a 12th century mystic who has been called the first composer by some, is featured at the top of Sine Nomine’s web site. Hildegard was sent to be educated in a monastery at the age of eight, and was nun by the age of 15. She is known to have had mystical visions which she incorporated into her writings, music and art throughout her life.

“"There is the music of heaven in all things, and we have forgotten how to hear it until we sing.""}

Hildegard is undoubtedly one of the earliest known composers and Sine Nomine is very fond of her music. Her quote aptly speaks to why members of this group dedicate so much of their personal time to preparing and performing what is known as early music. Indeed, for all who had the good fortune of hearing Sine Nomine’s performance that Sunday in June, it was heavenly music.

By the time of her death in 1179, her visionary insights led her to become an adviser to popes, bishops and kings. Her legacy is one of an accomplished composer, poet, and artist, and she was also the author of several books on both theology and science.

This fall’s concert, entitled St. Hildegard, will offer a unique and diverse look at its namesake and her music, which was written in a style called plainchant. The most familiar type of plainchant is Gregorian chant, but Hildegard put her own spin on the art form. Several of her chants will be featured, offering a spectrum of interpretations, including the premiere of a modern choral work. The diverse program will feature variations of soloists, small ensembles, and the full choir. As an added touch, the group will also be working with Marcus Monteiro, a saxophonist who will offer his own unique improvisations on the chants as well.

The concert will take place at St. Pius V, adjacent to the Providence College campus, on November 10. Admission will be $20. Further details, including advance reservations and directions to our venues will be available through our website this fall. For more information, visit www.sinenominechoir.org.

Jennifer Charleson is the Communications Director for Sine Nomine.