



**invisible lives  
silent voices**

## **Artistic Invisibilities**

Thursday February 17th 6-8 pm (CET)

### **Dr Chloë Allison, Marginalia Performance Collective - Bringing medieval music to new audiences in story and song**

At the end of the 12th century, Paris was full of leading thinkers as scholars and students traveled from across Western Europe to study at what would become the medieval university in 1215. This expanded the pool of musicians in Paris. In 1163, work began on the cathedral of Notre Dame. This gave those musicians an inspiring building in which to sing and provided the money to pay lots of them to do so on a regular basis. In this context, musicians made music in ways and on scales that were hugely ambitious and completely new. This paper discusses the challenges of bringing this exciting moment in musical history to life in a lecture-recital entitled 'In the Shadow of Notre Dame' for a diverse public audience, most of whom had never heard anything like the music created in Paris at that time.

### **Dr Anna-Luise Wagner, Marginalia Performance Collective - Back on Stage After 400 Years: Margherita Costa as Author and Singer in Baroque Italy**

Margherita Costa (c. 1600–after 1657) was one of the most prolific female authors of seventeenth-century Europe. As a singer and rumoured courtesan, she made her way in the courts and theatres of Rome, Florence, Turin, Paris, Venice, and perhaps even Germany, premiering operas like Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo* or Francesco Cavalli's *La Calisto*. Costa was a virtuosa performer on both stage and page: between 1630 and 1654, a period marked by a decline in secular women's writing in Italy, she produced fourteen full-length printed works across a remarkable range of genres, topics, and registers. Her unique position on the margins of courtly society allowed Costa to move more freely across the literary stage than any other female writer of her generation, switching easily between high and low style, decorous elegance and erotic allusions, encomiastic speeches and satirical parody. This literary versatility, combined with her talent as a performer, earned her the support of an enviable collection of elite patrons, including the Medici, the Barberini, the French royal house, and the Dukes of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Though this charismatic virtuosa inspired admiration in her contemporaries and left behind an astounding literary legacy, her life and oeuvre remain near-invisible in contemporary scholarship. Drawing on the doctoral research carried out by its founder, Marginalia Performance now plans to bring this extraordinary life from the margins of history to the stage, blending new settings of Costa's own words with arias she performed. Costa's journey opens a window onto the society and culture of a travelling musician and woman writer with a striking ability to succeed in an environment increasingly hostile to female public engagement. She possessed the hard-won skill of a successful marginalised creative: that of being many things at once – erotic, pious, satirical, rebellious, and pragmatic in turn.

**A Conversation with the Marginalia Collective and  
Playwright Léa Des Garets will follow the two presentations.**