

# LISA BIELAWA, COMPOSER/VOCALIST

*“the formal sophistication  
and lyrical richness of  
Bielawa’s music go deep”*  
–THE NEW YORKER



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# LISA BIELAWA

Composer-vocalist Lisa Bielawa is a Rome Prize winner in Musical Composition, and takes inspiration for her work from literary sources and close artistic collaborations. Her music has been described as “ruminative, pointillistic and harmonically slightly tart,” by *The New York Times*. She is the recipient of the 2017 Music Award from the American Academy of Arts & Letters and was named a William Randolph Hearst Visiting Artist Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society for 2018.

Bielawa received a 2018 Los Angeles Area Emmy nomination for her unprecedented, made-for-TV-and-online opera *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch’s Accuser*, created with librettist Erik Ehn and director Charles Otte. *Vireo* was filmed in twelve parts in locations across the country and features over 350 musicians. *The Los Angeles Times* called *Vireo* an opera, “unlike any you have seen before, in content and in form.” *Vireo* was produced as part of Bielawa’s artist residency at Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana, California and in partnership with KCETLink and Single Cel. In February 2019, *Vireo* was released as a two CD + DVD box set on Orange Mountain Music, featuring all of the music and episodes.

Bielawa became the inaugural Composer-in-Residence and Chief Curator at the Philip Glass Institute (PGI) at The New School’s College of the Performing Arts in 2019. The PGI is a landmark partnership between The New School, the Philip Glass Ensemble (PGE), and Bielawa, who has been the vocalist with the Ensemble since 1992. She recently made her orchestral conducting debut leading the Mannes String Orchestra in a special presentation by the PGI. In addition to performing as the vocalist in the PGE, Bielawa performs in many of her own works as well as the music of John Zorn, Anthony Braxton, Michael Gordon, and others.

Bielawa is currently at work on concertos for violinist Jennifer Koh and cellist Joshua Roman; an orchestral song cycle for mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin; and a commission from the Cathedral Choral Society. Her work has recently been premiered at the NY PHIL BIENNIAL, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, SHIFT Festival, Town Hall Seattle, Naumburg Orchestral Concerts Summer Series, National Sawdust, and Le Poisson Rouge, among others. Orchestras that have championed her music include the The Knights, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, American Composers Orchestra, and the Orlando Philharmonic. Premieres of her work have been commissioned and presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Miami String Quartet, Brooklyn Rider, Seattle Chamber Music Society, American Guild of Organists, American Pianists Association, California Music Center, and more.

Bielawa’s music can be found outside the concert hall as well. *Chance Encounter* was premiered by soprano Susan Narucki and The Knights in Lower Manhattan’s Seward Park. *Airfield Broadcasts* is a 60-minute work for hundreds of musicians, which was premiered on the tarmac of the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin and at Crissy Field in San Francisco. In November 2019, Bielawa’s *Mauer Broadcast* will be performed by hundreds of people in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate and at Alexanderplatz, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. She is recorded on the Cedille, Tzadik, TROY, Innova, BMOP/ sound, Orange Mountain Music and Sono Luminus labels.

In 1997 she co-founded the MATA Festival, which celebrates the work of young composers, and Bielawa served as Artistic Director of the acclaimed San Francisco Girls Chorus from 2013-2018. Born in San Francisco into a musical family, she played the violin and piano, sang, and wrote music from early childhood. She moved to New York two weeks after receiving her B.A. in Literature in 1990 from Yale University, and became an active participant in New York musical life.

# PROGRAMS

## Vireo Live

*VIREO LIVE* is a groundbreaking hybrid film-opera experience based on *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch's Accuser*, an award-winning made-for-TV-and-online opera by Lisa Bielawa, which premiered in 12 episodes on public television station KCET in Los Angeles. A production of Grand Central Art Center, KCET, and Single Cel, *Vireo* follows the path of a visionary teenage girl, "Vireo," played by soprano Rowen Sabala, who exists in three centuries, as various communities of men (priests, doctors, and artists) attempt to interpret her.

This new, 90-minute production will incorporate video projection of the film with live performance. With projected backdrops, costumes, and a small ensemble of five singers, string quartet, keyboard, and percussion, *VIREO LIVE* provides the audience with a unique opera experience combining the intense immediacy of live performance in dialogue with the fantasy created on screen. A workshop production will take place in March 2020 as part of the new Philip Glass Institute at The New School in New York City, of which Lisa Bielawa is the inaugural Composer-in-Residence.

The award-winning work has been described as "poetic and fantastical, visually stunning and relentlessly abstract ..." by the *San Francisco Classical Voice*. *Vireo* is the winner of the 2015 ASCAP Foundation Deeps Taylor/Virgil Thomson Multimedia Award, and a prestigious MAP Fund Grant. Lisa Bielawa and Charles Otte were both nominated for Los Angeles Area Emmy Awards in 2018.

## COMPLETE WORKS LIST

### ORCHESTRAL/LARGE ENSEMBLE

- CONCERTO FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA* (forthcoming) 25'  
*SANCTUARY* a violin concerto with chamber orchestra (2019) 25'  
*CENTURIES IN THE HOURS* for mezzo-soprano and orchestra without conductor (2019) 17'  
work for orchestra, large chorus, and organ (2019) 10'  
*FICTIONAL MIGRATIONS* for horn, flute/piccolo, and string orchestra (2018) 13'  
*DRAMA/SELF-PITY* for orchestra (2016) 5'  
*MY OUTSTRETCHED HAND* for chamber orchestra, youth chorus, and girls chorus (2016) 13'  
*HYPERMELODIA* for big band, chamber orchestra, piano, double bass, and two percussionists (2015) 15-20'  
*TEMPELHOF ETUDE* (2011) 15' (full) or 8' (short version)  
*EMERALD WALTZ* (2010) 5'  
*IN MEDIAS RES* a concerto for orchestra (2009) 22'  
*DOUBLE VIOLIN CONCERTO* for two violins and orchestra (2008) 27'  
*CHANCE ENCOUNTER* for soprano\*\* and 12 instruments, in public spaces (2007) 35'  
*THE RIGHT WEATHER* for chamber orchestra and piano soloist (2003-04) 40'  
*\*START* for chamber orchestra and piano soloist (2005) 13'  
*THE TROJAN WOMEN* for string orchestra (1999, rev. 2003) 12'  
*\*ROAM* for orchestra (2001) 9'  
*CAPE MAY SUITE* for orchestra (2000-2003) 32 1-2' movements, mix and match  
*UNFINISH'D, SENT* for soprano\*\* and chamber orchestra (1999-2000) 9'  
*TANTRUM* for symphonic band (1997) 8'

### CHAMBER/SOLO INSTRUMENTAL

- FICTIONAL MIGRATIONS* for flute/piccolo, horn, and piano (2017) 14'  
*INSOMNIA ETUDES* for solo violin; solo viola; solo cello (2017) 5' each  
*ONE ATOM OF FAITH* for voice and violin, one performer (2016) 5'  
*VIREO CAPRICE* for solo violin (2015) 6'  
*THE DRAGON AND THE GIRL* for solo cello (2014) 6'  
*'NEUMARK' DANCES: CHORALE PRELUDE ON WER NUR DEN LIEBEN GOTT* for solo organ (2014) 5'  
*VIREO CANONS AND CHORALE* for solo piano (2013) 6'  
*WINTER FANTASIA* for cello and organ (2012) 5'

*RONDOLETTE* for piano quintet (2011) 12'  
*ROMAN HOLIDAY BLUES* for solo cello using two-bow technique (2011) 7'  
*50 MEASURES FOR AARON* for piano and cello (2009) 7'  
*DOUBLE DUET* for saxophone quartet (2010) 15'  
*GARGOYLES* for solo flute (2009) 9'  
*SCENE & ARIA: LAYOVER IN CDG* for clarinet, violin, and cello (2009) 6'  
*THE PROJECT OF COLLECTING CLOUDS* for amplified chamber ensemble (2009) 10'  
*ELEGY-PORTRAIT* for solo piano (2008) 15'  
*SYNOPSIS* for solo instruments (Nov 2006–May 2009) 3–6' each  
*MEDITATIONS FROM "THE LAY OF THE LOVE AND DEATH"* for solo violin with narrator (2006) 15'  
\**START* for solo piano (2005) 11'  
*KAFKA SONGS* for voice and violin, one performer (2001-03) 25'  
*MIDTOWN PASSACAGLIA* for solo piano (2003) 3'  
\**WAIT* for piano with drone (2002) 8'  
*THE TROJAN WOMEN* for string quartet (1999, rev. 2001) 12'  
*THE GREAT PLASTO-DIO DADA DRAMA* for solo percussion (1997) 14'

### CHAMBER WITH VOICE

*CENTURIES IN THE HOURS* for mezzo-soprano and piano (2019) 17'  
*SANCTUARY SONGS* for violin and soprano\*\* (2017) 13'  
*ONE ATOM OF FAITH* for voice and violin, one performer (2016) 5'  
*EGO SUM* for soprano and electro-acoustic chamber ensemble (2014) 8'  
*INCESSABILI VOCE* for soprano\*\*, alto/tenor saxophone, Bb/bass clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (2013) 23'  
*BREAKFAST IN NEW YORK* for four voices and violin (2011) 6'  
*THE HOURI AND THE POET* for soprano\*\* with piano and cello (2011) 6'  
*GRAFFITI DELL'AMANTE* for string quartet and soprano\*\* (2010) 5-30' (variable length)  
*SCENE & ARIA: LAYOVER IN CDG* for soprano\*\*, cello, and piano (2009, arr. 2014)  
*THE LAY OF THE LOVE AND DEATH* for baritone voice, piano, and violin (2006) 25'  
*HURRY* for soprano\*\*, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (2004) 15'  
*KAFKA SONGS* for voice and violin, one performer (2001-03) 25'  
*GENESIS AGAIN* for soprano\*\* and violin (1998) 11'

### ELECTRONIC/ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC

*EGO SUM* for soprano and electro-acoustic chamber ensemble (2014) 8'  
*MACHINA MUNDI* for six voices and digital audio (2000) 20'  
*A COLLECTIVE CLEANSING* for solo voice\*\* and digital audio (1999, rev. 2000) 15'

### CHORAL/VOCAL ENSEMBLE

*MAUER BROADCAST* for four instruments and hundreds of voices in a public space (2019) 15'  
*WALKS OF LIFE* for mixed chorus and brass trio (2017) 8-10'  
*OPENING: FOREST* from the opera *Vireo* for treble chorus and string quartet (2014) 5'  
*SONGS FROM ORT* for women's chorus (2012)  
*SUCH ANOTHER SLEEP* for men's double chorus (TTBB TTBB), soprano\*\*, and optional bass drum (2012) 8'  
*LAMENTATIONS FOR A CITY* for mixed chorus and English horn (2004) 14'  
*MACHINA MUNDI* for six voices and digital audio (2000) 20'  
*LETTER TO ANNA* for a cappella girls chorus (1998) 6'  
*THE BOAT* for three solo sopranos (1996) 3'  
*FROM 'THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL'* for chorus and percussion (1996) 16'  
*SPINNING FLAX* for a capella treble chorus and soloists (1994) 5'

### OPERA AND MUSIC THEATER

*VIREO: THE SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY OF A WITCH'S ACCUSER* (2017)  
*THE TROJAN WOMEN* music for Euripides' tragedy (1999)  
*THE ELECTRONIC ORDO VIRTUTUM - ACT I* (1998) 14'  
*PHRENIC CRUSH* a chamber opera - Erik Ehn, librettist (1997) 70'

\**Roam*, *Wait* and *Start* may be performed separately or as sections of the larger work *The Right Weather*.

\*\*Composer is available for performance of these vocal works



# LISA BIELAWA VIREO LIVE

VIREO

CONCEPT RENDERING

*“a moody, haunting and wonderfully varied meditation on the perceptions of witchcraft and female power through the ages”*

—SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

*“Bielawa’s new opera ... is unlike any you have seen before, in content and in form.”*

—LOS ANGELES TIMES



**Film Producer, Director, and Production Design: Charles Otte**  
**Creative Producer, Composer: Lisa Bielawa**  
**Libretto: Erik Ehn**

**Featuring:**

**Rowen Sabala, soprano**  
**Emma MacKenzie, soprano**  
**Greg Purnhagen, baritone**

**Kirsten Sollek, contralto**  
**Ryan Glover, tenor**  
**American Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME)**

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