

LISA BIELAWA, COMPOSER/VOCALIST

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



WWW.LISABIELAWA.NET



JENSEN ARTISTS

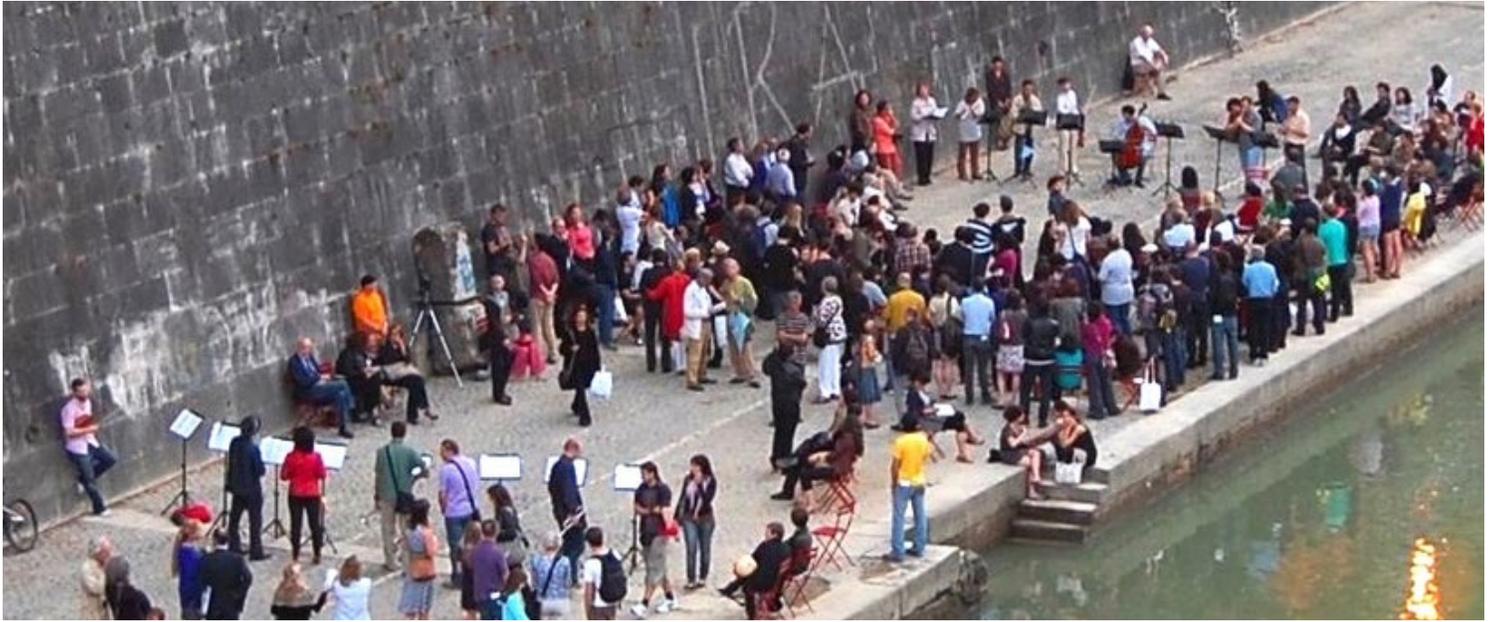
MANAGEMENT & PR:

CHRISTINA JENSEN, CHRISTINA@JENSENARTISTS.COM

GINA MEOLA, GINA@JENSENARTISTS.COM

646.536.7864

PROGRAMS



Chance Encounter

Lisa Bielawa's *Chance Encounter* is a 40-minute site-specific musical work, in which a soprano and 12 professional instrumentalists convene, one or several at a time, in public spaces. The soprano sings songs and arias constructed of texts collected in public spaces, thereby enacting the listener's private (yet collective) experience. Each performance location requires a re-mapping of the spatial and movement elements of the piece. For the 15th anniversary of this work from 2007, Bielawa is seeking to partner with venues and locally based ensembles for custom performances that celebrate exactly what many of us have knowingly or unknowingly missed during the pandemic – the chance encounters and overheard snippets of conversation that connect us, often subconsciously, to our fellow humans.

Soprano Susan Narucki, for whom the work was originally written, and Lisa Bielawa researched *Chance Encounter* for more than a year. Bielawa carried a notebook with her everywhere, jotting down utterances that begged to be proclaimed, sung. She said, "I noticed over time that people often say things in transient spaces that help them locate themselves in space and time ('Last time I ate here by myself;' 'Remember – it was snowing horribly? And she was holding the dog?'), or provide a summary understanding of 'the way things are' ('They used to give you a paper bag with a sandwich and an apple, and that was the beginning of the end;' 'It's tough when you know what's out there, and all you can do is look'). Susan and I collected hundreds of such utterances, many of them in Lower Manhattan. I have organized them into categories – Aimlessness; The Third Person Who Is Absent; Nostalgia – and created free-form arias or songs that animate the particular mood of each collective topic."

The performance gathers the instrumentalists together from out of the crowd and similarly disbursts them at the end. The players will have synchronized their watches earlier in the day via conference call – their entrances can be governed by absolute time. The soprano soloist is not the first to arrive, nor the last. She sings about nostalgia ("Do you ever go to your old apartment?" "We used to have a house here, but then my father lost his job. I never go there now.") and strangely resonant commonplaces ("What kind of place are you looking for?" "Are you by yourself?") The group migrates and splits up over the course of the piece, moving away from the soprano and back towards her. Audience members also move around and customize what they hear based on their own locations in relation to the performers.

Chance Encounter has been recorded by The Knights and Susan Narucki for Orange Mountain Music (December 2010), and has been performed in Venice, Rome, Salzburg, Vancouver, Santa Ana, at Yale University, and at the Whitney Museum in New York City.



Custom Broadcasts

For almost a decade, Lisa Bielawa has been creating a series of *Broadcasts* – works for performance in public spaces, including *Airfield Broadcasts* on the sites of former airfields in San Francisco and Berlin in 2013, and *Mauer Broadcast* marking the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2019. Lisa Bielawa's *Broadcasts* are broadly participatory musical asynchronous performances for any combination of voices and instruments. Her music for the *Broadcast* series is composed and constructed in ways that makes it perfect for participation by musicians in person or virtually.

Broadcasts take their inspiration—and implementation—from the new reality facing several interconnected communities: music lovers and audiences who are seeking more active ways to have musical experiences both in person and remotely; organizations that are seeking to fulfill their mission in ever-changing circumstances; vocal and instrumental performers – professional, student or amateur – who seek a fully embodied, non-tech-centered way to share with audiences; and people in our community who are turning to artistic experience to bring them closer to one another at this time of increased uncertainty.

Bielawa is seeking to create custom broadcasts, for which she would compose musical phrases using texts sourced in collaboration with the presenter from the presenter's community, around a theme or topic developed with the presenter and/or community. The performance aspect of the work can be created either in person, virtually, or in a hybrid setting, with professional as well as amateur and/or student musicians involved, as desired. Throughout the process, Bielawa would meet with key participants

in order to establish a connection with them and to workshop elements of the piece. From start to finish, the entire process would happen over the course of 8-16 weeks, depending on the length and scope of the work, culminating in the world premiere.

Since the pandemic began, Lisa Bielawa has created three custom *Broadcast* projects, which have all been responsive to the world's current circumstances. Her work *Broadcast from Home*, created online throughout the 15-week period of the first lockdown, features over 500 submitted testimonies and recorded voices from six continents in Chapters that were released online weekly. The far-reaching project was featured nationally on *NPR*, in *The Washington Post*, and on the podcast *To the Best of Our Knowledge*. In October 2020, Lisa premiered *Voters' Broadcast*, a transformative Election Year musical work for online and/or socially distanced musicians commissioned by the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and developed with the Kaufman Music Center in New York, created to stimulate voter engagement. The work sets postcards written to current Presidents and Presidential candidates from 2004-2020, collected by artist Sheryl Oring's *I Wish to Say* project, and was recorded by hundreds of musicians from the University community and Kaufman Music Center's Special Music School, a public high school. In November 2020, Lisa's work *Brickyard Broadcast*, a spatialized work for hundreds of musicians commissioned by North Carolina State University, had its world premiere in a Virtual Reality (VR) environment.

LISA BIELAWA

Composer, producer, and 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 a 2020 Discovery Grant from OPERA America’s Opera Grants for Female Composers. She was named a William Randolph Hearst Visiting Artist Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society for 2018 and was Artist-in-Residence at Kaufman Music Center in New York for the 2020–2021 season.

Bielawa has established herself as one of today’s leading composers and performers, who consistently executes work that incorporates community-making as part of her artistic vision. She has created music for public spaces in Lower Manhattan, the banks of the Tiber River in Rome, on the sites of former airfields in Berlin and San Francisco, and to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall; she was a co-founder in 1997 of the MATA Festival which continues to support young composers; and for five years she was the artistic director of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, bringing the chorus to the NY PHIL BIENNIAL and introducing the young performers to the music of today through numerous premieres and commissions of leading composers.

Recent large-scale participatory works include *Broadcast from Home*, *BFH Radio—Broadcast from Here*, *Voters’ Broadcast*, and *Brickyard Broadcast*. Described by *The Washington Post* as “spellbinding,” *Broadcast from Home* has been realized online throughout the period of the coronavirus lockdown, featuring over 500 submitted testimonies and recorded voices from six continents. *BFH Radio* is a 24/7, continuous and evolving soundscape built from the public’s words, voices, and found audio, submitted from all over the world. *Voters’ Broadcast’s* mission was to stimulate voter engagement, political awareness, and community participation in challenging lockdown conditions, through the act of giving voice to the concerns of fellow citizens, during the lead-up to the 2020 Presidential election. It was commissioned as part of the Democracy & Debate theme-semester by the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor with support from its School of Music, Theatre & Dance, and developed in partnership with Kaufman Music Center in New York. *Brickyard Broadcast* is a spatialized work for hundreds of musicians commissioned by North Carolina State University that had its world premiere in a Virtual Reality (VR) environment designed by the digital media teams at the NC State University Libraries in November 2020.

Lisa 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. The groundbreaking opera was filmed in twelve parts at 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.

Bielawa’s recent and current work includes concertos for violinist Jennifer Koh and cellist Joshua Roman and an orchestral song cycle for mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin, which together form a trilogy inspired by the American voices she discovered during her 2018 fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society. The song cycle for Rubin, *Centuries in the Hours*, takes its text from a collection of diaries by American women of the 18th-20th centuries whose life circumstances rendered them historically invisible. It was premiered by ROCO (River Oaks Chamber Orchestra) in September 2019. Bielawa is currently developing *Centuries in the Hours* as a unique opera experience. The concerto for Koh, titled *Sanctuary*, had its world premiere in January 2020 with the Orlando Philharmonic and is co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall, American Composers Orchestra, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Bielawa has also recently completed *Voters’ Litany*, a commission from the Cathedral Choral Society in celebration of the of the 19th Amendment, which will be premiered at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.