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Photo by Carlin Ma available in high-res at [www.jensenartists.com/lisa-bielawa](http://www.jensenartists.com/lisa-bielawa)

**World Premiere of Composer Lisa Bielawa's *Centuries in the Hours*  
Performed by mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin with the  
River Oaks Chamber Orchestra**

**Friday, September 27, 2019 at 8pm**  
Miller Outdoor Theatre | Hermann Park Drive | Houston, TX  
Free Admission; No advance reservations required

**Saturday, September 28, 2019 at 5pm**  
The Church of St. John the Divine | 2450 River Oaks Boulevard | Houston, TX  
Subscription tickets available now at [www.roco.org/performances](http://www.roco.org/performances)  
Single tickets on sale September 3

**"[Lisa Bielawa has a] prodigious gift for mingling persuasive melodicism with organic experimentation" – *Time Out New York***

**Lisa Bielawa: [www.lisabelawa.net](http://www.lisabelawa.net)**

Houston, TX – **On Friday, September 27 at 8pm and Saturday, September 28 at 5pm**, the world premiere of composer-vocalist **Lisa Bielawa's** song cycle *Centuries in the Hours* is presented by the **River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO)**. This five-song orchestral cycle by Bielawa was composed expressly for blind mezzo-soprano **Laurie Rubin**, whose voice has been described by the *LA Times* as "darkly complex and mysteriously soulful." The piece was composed with a conductorless orchestra in mind, and it is the centerpiece of ROCO's 2019-2020 season opener, "Time for Hope."

Each song in *Centuries in the Hours* is the setting of a diary excerpt by an American woman whose life circumstances rendered her historically invisible. The idea grew out of Bielawa's residency as a William Randolph Hearst Visiting Artist Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA. There, she discovered and read 72 diaries representing staggering diversity of women from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds, of all ages, from all corners of the US, from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

"These women showed me an America that was completely unknown to me, invisible yet fully lived, behind the doors and in the corners, for centuries," explains Bielawa. "The project meditates on the theme of invisibility: How do we, through performance, make visible the invisible, make things vivid in unexpected ways? To that end, it brings to light written words of women who were 'invisible' in their social milieu, while it celebrates heightened non-visual communication and shared leadership in performance."

*Centuries in the Hours* was commissioned by ROCO and the ASCAP Foundation Charles Kingsford Fund. Additional works on ROCO's September 27 and 28 programs include Judith Shatin's *Ice Becomes Water*; Alejandro Basulto's *Triptico de Luz*; Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 104 "London"; plus three additional ROCO Commission World Premieres, from the Fifteen Project: Desmond Ikegwonu's *Na So E Be*; Osnat Netzer's *Varium caeli*; and Mark Buller's *Whirligig*.

Performances are held Friday, September 27, 2019 at 8pm is at Miller Outdoor Theatre (Hermann Park Drive) with free admission and Saturday, September 28, 2019 at 5:00pm at The Church of St. John the Divine (2450 River Oaks Boulevard). Tickets and more information available at [www.roco.org/performances](http://www.roco.org/performances).

**About 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.

In 1997 Bielawa 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. She 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 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, and Naumburg Orchestral Concerts Summer Series, 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, Brooklyn Rider, Seattle Chamber Music Society, American Guild of Organists, 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. She is recorded on the Tzadik, TROY, Innova, BMOP/ sound, Orange Mountain Music and Sono Luminus labels. For more information, please visit [www.lisabelawa.net](http://www.lisabelawa.net).

**About Laurie Rubin:** Mezzo-soprano Laurie Rubin has received high praise from The New York Times chief classical music critic Anthony Tommasini, who wrote that she possesses "compelling artistry," "communicative power," and that her voice displays "earthy, rich, and poignant qualities."

On October 23, 2012, Seven Stories Press published Rubin's memoir, *Do You Dream in Color? Insights From a Girl Without Sight*. Recounting her experiences from childhood through the rise of her career as an opera singer, Rubin shows how her determination to continually surpass and redefine others' expectations, has enabled her to defy the naysayers who told her that she would never experience romance, have a real job, live independently, much less ski, design jewelry or fulfill her ambition to sing on stage.

Ms. Rubin has performed a number of operatic roles, including the role of the voice/witch in Lisa Bielawa's award-winning, episodic TV Opera "Vireo, the spiritual biography of a witch's accuser," broadcast on KCET's Art Bound program. Laurie made her Ravinia debut in concert with Frederica Von Stade in September 2015, and will return in 2019 in a solo recital. She was also the title role in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, Mrs. Noye in Britten's "Noye's Fludde," under the baton of Dr. Samuel Wong, the lead role of Karen in Gordon Beeferman's *The Rat Land* at New York City Opera's VOX Festival, Penelope in Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses* at the Greenwich Music Festival and Elle in Poulenc's *The Human Voice* at the Greenwich Music Festival and the Ohana Arts Festival. Ms. Rubin has also performed concerts of new music with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She has collaborated with and premiered works by composers John Harbison, Gabriela Lena Frank, Keeril Makan, Bruce Adolphe, Noam Sivan and Gordon Beeferman.

A co-founder and co-artistic director of *Musique a la Mode* Chamber Music Ensemble, which has a concert series in Manhattan's East Village, Ms. Rubin is also one of the founding members of the baroque ensemble *Callisto Ascending* which has performed concerts at Lincoln Center. In addition, she is the co-founder and associate artistic director of *Ohana Arts*, a performing arts festival and school in Honolulu, Hawaii.

**About River Oaks Chamber Orchestra:** ROCO is a dynamic and innovative professional music ensemble that flexes from 1 to 40 players from all over the US and Canada, with guest artists from around the world. Performing intimate concerts in dozens of venues, ROCO's musicians don't just give concerts – they challenge preconceptions, create extraordinary experiences, and foster new relationships with audiences through the language of music.

Expanding the repertoire, ROCO has premiered over 65 commissions from living American composers. ROCO embraces technology, with free worldwide concert livestreams and real-time artist commentary via a smartphone app, as well as on-demand recordings of past concerts via the Listening Room. A vital part of the community, ROCO concert DVDs are sent to nursing homes and hospitals to bring music to those immobile communities, and their music education/childcare program attracts multigenerational audiences.