

Eastman Musica Nova

Brad Lubman,
music director

Peiwen Zou,
assistant conductor

Lisa Bielawa,
*Howard Hanson Visiting
Guest Composer,
and soprano*

Thursday, December 4, 2025
Kilbourn Hall
7:30 PM

~ PROGRAM ~
Eastman Musica Nova
Brad Lubman, *music director*
Peiwen Zou, *assistant conductor*

Overcast Skies (2023)

Matthew Lam
(b. 1999)
7'

Brad Lubman, *conductor*

Phlegra (1975)

Iannis Xenakis
(1922-2001)
13'

Peiwen Zou, *conductor*

Incessabili Voce (2013)

Lisa Bielawa
(b. 1968)
20'

Lisa Bielawa, *soprano*
Brad Lubman, *conductor*



Eastman School of Music

~ PROGRAM NOTES ~

Overcast Skies

Winter often gives people a depressing mood. One of the factors that contributes to that is the continuous overcast skies, which greatly reduces sunlight even during daytime. In *Overcast Skies*, I tried not only to paint the image of a gloomy, misty overcast sky in a cold, windy and snowy winter day, but I also sprinkled some melancholiness throughout to simulate the mood. The piece also plays with different textures in different sections of the piece, with the most notable being the atmospheric, blurry middle section, and the chorale-like texture in very high register in the latter parts of the piece.

- Matthew Lam

Phlegra

Phlegra is a one-movement, thirteen-minute composition for an ensemble of eleven instruments written for and premiered by the London Sinfonietta in 1975. *Phlegra* is the battlefield of Greek mythology where the battle of the Titans against the new gods of Olympus took place. “As in other of my recent compositions, I have continued to construct textures and organize them on a higher level. I refer to textures in a general sense of form. For example, I first develop a melodic texture in the woodwinds; in parallel, a kind of aleatoric march emerges in the strings as a second element. A third is repeated notes that obey strict rhythmic rules, and so on. Textures in the sense of form are for me the cornerstone of art and science.”

- Iannis Xenakis (translation: Matthias Arter)

Incessabili Voce

When I was invited by Ensemble Variances to write a piece on the theme of “The Cry” as “an expression of a basic language shared by all human beings as well as a majority of animals,” a specific memory from my early childhood came up: singing the *Book of Common Prayer* translation of the Te Deum in my mother’s Episcopal church choir: To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry.” I remember wondering about these terrifyingly large, animal-like angels, and how they managed this continual crying for joy. Didn’t they ever get tired? Or need to eat something? The idea of multitudes of beings crying for joy reminded me then of the story of the 10,000 Greek soldiers in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* who trudged through enemy territory for weeks, forces decimated and leaders slain, trying to get home. When the front line of soldiers saw the Sea, they also cried out for joy. While the angels cry out “Sanctus! Sanctus!” (Holy! Holy!), the soldiers cry out “Thalatta! Thalatta!” (The sea! The sea!), because once they see the water they know the way home, and they know they will get there. While at the Radcliffe Institute in Cambridge, MA, I met a Classics scholar who wrote an entire book on this cry of the 10,000 Greeks, and its resonance throughout literature ever since. Tim Rood’s studies led me to Heinrich Heine’s *The North Sea*, in which he meditates on this epic moment.

As vocal soloist in my own work, I wanted to explore some of the performance implications of these various texts that had entered my process. In designing material for the voice, I thought about singing in church, the ecstatic singing of angels, the roar of soldiers, the mannerisms of Greek storytelling in the great oral tradition, the traditions of Gregorian and Anglican chant. The vocal part coaxes cries of various sorts out of the instruments. The texture of the ensemble writing bears witness to my preoccupation, still as lively as when I was six years old, with the sloppy joyfulness of a multitude crying ceaselessly all together – whether angels or soldiers.

I let all of these images, texts, traditions and energies enter the piece and mingle together, without strict dramatic intent. It is more of a dreamscape than a story, more cry than word.

- Lisa Bielawa

~ MEET THE ARTIST ~

Composer, producer, and vocalist **Lisa Bielawa** is a Guggenheim Fellow and Rome Prize winner who takes inspiration for her work from literary sources and close artistic collaborations. She has received awards and fellowships from the Koussevitzky Foundation, American Academy of Arts & Letters, OPERA America, and American Antiquarian Society, Loghaven Artist Residency, and was part of the inaugural Louisville Orchestra’s Creators Corps. She received a Los Angeles Area Emmy nomination for her unprecedented, made-for-TV-and-online opera *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch’s Accuser*. Her music has been premiered at the NY PHIL BIENNIAL, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, SHIFT Festival, National Cathedral, Rouen Opera, MAXXI Museum in Rome, and Helsinki Music Center, among others. Orchestras that have championed her music include The Knights, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, ROCO, 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, Radio France, Yerevan Concert Hall in Armenia, the Venice Architectural Biennale, American Music Week in Salzburg, the INFANT Festival in Novi Sad, Serbia, and more. Bielawa consistently incorporates community-making as part of her artistic vision. She has created music for public spaces in Lower Manhattan, a bridge over the Ohio River in Louisville, KY, 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. During the pandemic, Bielawa cultivated a virtual community using submitted testimonies and recorded voices from six continents through her work *Broadcast from Home*, now archived by the Library of Congress. For more information, please visit www.lisabelawa.net.

~ **PERSONNEL** ~
Eastman Musica Nova

Flute

Julia Benitez-Nelson

Oboe

Xander O'Neil

Clarinet

Andrew Neagoe

Bassoon

Aaron Lukenbill

Saxophone

Matthias Roth

Horn

Nick Culver

Trumpet

Jacob Hunkins

Trombone

Joshua Hunt

Percussion

Michael Smith

Keyboard

Irene Huang

Endong Li

Violin

Zihua Ma

Ella Zack

Viola

Sujin Kim

Violoncello

Aaron Lieberman

Vivian Tupker

Yu-Ping Wu

Double Bass

Lindsey Joslin

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.



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