

in the news

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GONG SHOW: For the first time in its 111-year history, and after 18 nominations, Seattle Symphony has won a Grammy Award. *Become Ocean*, composed by John Luther Adams (pictured standing with the orchestra), took the Best Contemporary Classical Composition prize at a glittering LA ceremony earlier this month. The orchestra received six nominations in five categories – the most it has received in any single year – including Best Orchestral Performance; Best Classical Instrumental Solo (by Xavier Phillips); and Best Engineered Performance, for Seattle Symphony Media's (SSM) recording of works by Henri Dutilleul. In addition, the commission and performance of *Become Ocean* received nominations for Best Contemporary Composition and Best Engineered Performance. SSM recording engineer Dmitriy Lipay was nominated as Producer of the Year. Photo © Chris Lee

MUSIC

New serial opera to be broadcast online

Two public taping sessions are taking place in California this month, aiming to record the pilot episode of a new episodic opera performance intended for serial broadcast over the internet.

The work, entitled *Vireo: The Spiritual Biography of a Witch's Accuser*, marks the first time an opera performance has been expressly created and recorded for an episodic release online.

Composed by writer-conductor Lisa Bielawa with a libretto by playwright Erik Ehn, the Charles Otte-directed project will feature San Francisco heavyweights the Kronos Quartet alongside mezzo-sopranos Laurie Rubin and Maria Lazarova, baritone Gregory Purnhagen, drummer Matthias Bossi, the San Francisco Girls Chorus, the Orange County School of the Arts Middle School Choir, and 16-year-old soprano Rowen Sabala in the lead role of *Vireo*.

Said Bielawa of the thinking behind the project: '*Vireo*'s subject matter, libretto and musical language were hatched 20 years ago in my earliest collaborative exchanges with Erik, but we conceived of it at the time as a traditional three-act opera. The project came to life again when we realised that the TV/internet series format might be a great way to roll out something as unwieldy and many-chaptered as an opera. We began to reach out to others – director Charlie Otte, Kronos Quartet – and

discovered that this odd marriage of formats really captured people's creative imaginations.'

Vireo is based on Bielawa's research into heretics as a literature major at Yale, and offers a composite history of the ways in which teenaged girls' writings and claims have been manipulated, incorporated and interpreted by our more male-dominated communities, spanning a vast period from the European Dark Ages through to the contemporary performance art era.

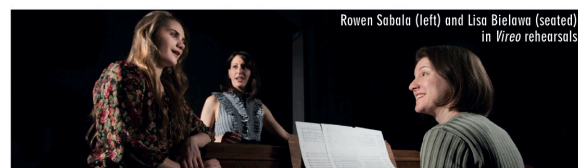
The project evolved via California State University's artist residency programme at the Grand Central Art Center, and is being produced in partnership with KCETLink, a national independent non-profit digital and broadcast network. The recording process will also be followed for a TV special presented by *Artbound*, KCETLink's Emmy-award-winning arts and culture series.

'Ease of access to opera houses and cultural centres, cost of tickets, and the

impression that one needs to be an expert to understand 'serious' art like opera are all barriers,' Bielawa told *IAM*. 'I imagine this format might help in all of these cases, bringing new work that is made for media directly to viewers in a way that's welcoming. When artists make work with a full awareness of the changing world, the audiences in it, and the way people relate to music and to stories as a result of their changing relationships with media, then innovation will inevitably occur.'

Filming for the first episode takes place at Santa Ana's Yost Theatre from 7pm on 23 and 24 February, with both sessions open to the public and free of charge (booking required). The resulting 25-minute pilot segment of *Vireo* is scheduled for internet release on 31 March. Later episodes will be broadcast after further recording sessions are completed in a number of different cities and locations around the US.

grandcentralartcenter.com



Rowen Sabala (left) and Lisa Bielawa (seated) in *Vireo* rehearsals

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