

## Vireo Caprice

# Lisa Bielawa

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### Note

Premiere: May 31, 2016, National Sawdust. Commissioned by Elizabeth and Justus Schlichting for violinist Jennifer Koh, for her “Shared Madness” program on the 2016 NY PHIL Biennial.  
Duration: 5’  
Instrumentation: Solo violin

Jenny Koh and I have shared a dressing room all over the world, while on tour together with Philip Glass and Robert Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach*. Through this experience I got to know not just her unique sound – such strength in the core, such gentleness in the nuances – but also her humanity. I chose to “respond” to Paganini Caprice #6, and those who know this work will recognize the multi-layered textures and restless, disturbed lyricism in the work. Embedded in this virtuoso landscape is a plaintive melody that is a leitmotif for the eponymous heroine of my opera *Vireo*, a 12-episode TV and internet series, the first-ever hybrid of this kind. The work, and Jenny (playing in the snowy ice-covered Sargasso Sea) became part of Episode 10. Based on my own research at Yale as a Literature major, then freely adapted and re-imagined by my librettist Ehn, *Vireo* is a composite history of the way in which teenage-girl visionaries’ writings and rantings have been manipulated, incorporated, and interpreted by the communities of men surrounding them throughout history, from the European Dark Ages, to Salem Massachusetts, 19th-century France, the Surrealists in Paris, and contemporary performance art. *Vireo* herself is a 14-year old girl who hears voices and lives in three centuries at once. It is fitting, then, that this piece finds Jenny hovering between Paganini’s time and our own, each with its own yearnings and resolutions.

– Lisa Bielawa

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