

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Chamber orchestra celebrate 10 years

April 27, 2014

By: Steven Brown

The River Oaks Chamber Orchestra will celebrate its 10th anniversary by premiering a new work during each program of its main series during the 2014-15 season.

The season will have a literary theme, with the premieres and other works drawing from Walt Whitman poetry, Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," and Kate DiCamillo's children's book "The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane." The new works, which will bring the orchestra's total of commissioned pieces to 47, help explain the new title of the group's main series, ROCO Alive in Concert, artistic director Alecia Lawyer said.

"The orchestra is alive, you're alive, and a lot of our composers are alive," Lawyer said.

In addition to new works, the season will include symphonies by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Schubert. An 13-musician ensemble will perform a chamber version of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4 at the Rothko Chapel.

The orchestra's main series will be at the Church of St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd., and three programs will be performed at other locations:

Sept. 27: "Once Upon a Time," conductor Victor Yampolsky and violinist Brian Lewis. Gioacchino Rossini's Overture to "The Italian Girl in Algiers," Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, Benjamin Britten's Suite on English Folk Tunes, new work by Maria Newman based on Kate DiCamillo's "The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane." Also Sept. 28 at Miller Outdoor Theatre, 6000 Hermann Park.

Nov. 8: "Serious Fun," conductor Alastair Willis and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1, Felix Mendelssohn's "The Fair Melusina," Ralph Vaughan Williams' Overture to "The Wasps," new works by Anthony DiLorenzo based on Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky." Also Nov. 9 at The Centrum, 6823 Cypresswood, Spring.

Feb. 14: "Mutual Affection - Conductorless," violinist Cho-Liang Lin as leader and soloist. Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 5, Edward Elgar's "Salut d'Amour," Antonin Dvorak's Romance, new work by Derek Bermel. Also Feb. 13 at Grace Presbyterian Church, 10221 Ella Lee Lane.

April 23: "Notes to Be Written," conductor David Danzmayr and mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke. Mendelssohn's "Reformation" Symphony, new work by Pierre Jalbert inspired by Walt Whitman and Stephen Foster.

The concert series spotlighting individual players, now called ROCO Unchambered, will move to The Vanderbilt, an event space opening later this year at 2500 Summer Street near downtown Houston. The venue, with a décor inspired by Grand Central Terminal, will allow each concert to be set up in a way that suits the music, Lawyer said. The schedule:

Nov. 23: "Walk with Me," jazz and spiritual music featuring trombonist Thomas Hulten.

Jan. 25: "Divas and Ballerinas," ballet and opera suites featuring violinist Tawnya Popoff.

Feb. 22: "Six Degrees of Tolstoy," music that influenced Leo Tolstoy or was inspired by him, with violinist Maureen Nelson.

April 12: "The Little Prince," work by Daniel Kellogg inspired by the Antoine de Saint-Exupery story, with violist Matt Dane and flutist Christina Jennings.

The group also will present two special concerts in a series called "Limited Engagements."

March 26: Tribute to Billie Holiday, celebration of the singer's centennial featuring jazz vocalist Stephanie Jordan. The Vanderbilt.

May 21: Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4 in an arrangement for 13 musicians. Rothko Chapel, 3900 Yupon.

The Connections series will take small ensembles to Bayou Bend, Lawndale Arts Center and other locations with concerts linked such themes as Day of the Dead.

Subscriptions for ROCO Alive in Concert and ROCO Unchambered are \$50-\$200. Single tickets will go on sale Aug. 1. Details: 713-665-2700, rocohouston.org.