

## Friday, March 31, 2017 • 7:30 pm

The Woodlands United Methodist Church

## Saturday, April 1, 2017 • 5:00 pm

The Church of St. John the Divine

Steven Jarvi, conductor

Brook Ferguson, flute soloist · Alexander Miller, composer

#### Gustav Holst 1874-1934

Brook Green Suite

I. Prelude • II. Air • III. Andante • III. Dance

#### Saverio Mercadante (Mer-cuh-DAHN-tay) 1795 - 1870

Concerto for Flute in E minor, op. 57

I. Allegro maestoso • II. Largo • III. Rondo

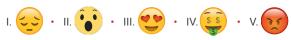
----25 minutes----

#### Alexander Miller b. 1968

ROCOmoji - Concerto Grosso for Double Reeds

(ROCO COMMISSIONED WORLD PREMIERE)

Alecia Lawyer, oboe • Alexander Miller, oboe • Spring Hill, english horn Kristin Wolfe Jensen, bassoon • Nathan Koch, bassoon Daniel Chrisman, contrabassoon



---15 minutes----

#### **OCTAVA ENABLED**

Arnold Schoenberg (SHERN-berg) 1874 – 1951

Verklärte Nacht

----28 minutes----

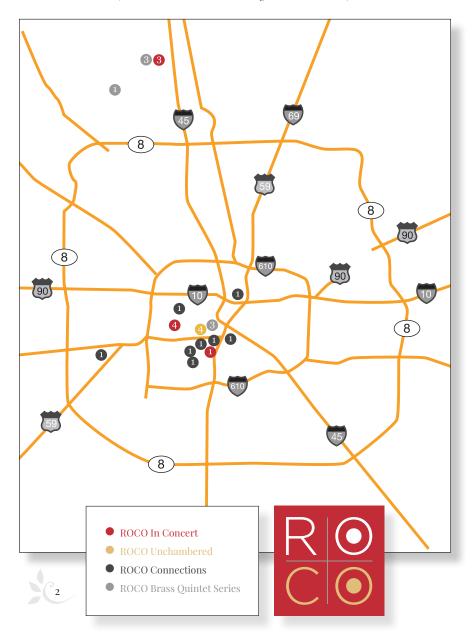
#### **OCTAVA ENABLED**

This evening's music will include the pieces above, not necessarily in order, with a short intermission called Take 5.

# Where we play!

Join ROCO in exploring Houston and beyond through concerts that span the Southwest to the far Northern reaches of our area.

(Private salons in homes and galleries not listed)



Octava -- a new level of concert engagement

ROCO is the first professional orchestra to premiere Octava, a brand new smart phone app that's changing the concert-going experience. Developed by Linda

Dusman, composer, and Eric Smallwood, artist, from the University of Maryland, it delivers real-time program commentary from musicians and guest artists. It's not just another way to deliver program notes, however; we have a program for that - you are holding it in your hands. Instead, think of it like a director's commentary or VH1's Pop-Up Videos. ROCO has found a way to talk and play at the same time! Enjoy both our musical and literary conversation with you.



## How do you get in on this?

- Turn off the ringer on your phone, or place it in "Do Not Disturb" mode, so you can receive the Octava feed but keep your smart phone silent.
- 2. Go to the App Store or Google Play, search for Octava and download it to your phone.
- 3. Open the app before OCTAVA-ENABLED pieces (indicated in red on the program page), and press start. The app will start automatically once the music begins. ROCO team members and ushers are available to answer questions.

Thanks for helping ROCO "Shape the Future of Classical Music!"



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*Flutes* 

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#### Featured Conductor

**Steven Jarvi**, *conductor* SUPPORTED BY CONDUCTOR CONSORTIUM

Praised for his "uncommonly expressive and detailed" performances by the Miami Herald and described as an "eloquent and decisive" conductor by

The Wall Street Journal, **Steven Jarvi** is a conductor with equal passion for the concert hall and the opera house. Most recently, Mr. Jarvi completed his tenure as the Resident Conductor of the St. Louis Symphony.

Having previously served as Conducting Fellow with Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony, Associate Conductor for New York City Opera, and the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Conductor with the Washington National Opera, Jarvi won the Bruno Walter Memorial Foundation Award while serving as Associate Conductor for the Kansas City Symphony.

Mr. Jarvi has conducted across North America and Europe, and has also performed with popular Grammy© Award-winners Idina Menzel, Art Garfunkel, Lyle Lovett, Chris Botti, and Kenny G, as well as Ben Folds.

Jarvi was personally selected by Plácido Domingo as the first conductor ever invited to the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at the Kennedy Center's Washington National Opera. Recent opera engagements include the world premieres of An American Soldier and Approaching Ali, as well as appearances with the Virginia Opera, Winter Opera Saint Louis, Baltimore Lyric Opera, and Ash Lawn Opera Festival.

An advocate of new music, he has collaborated with celebrated composers including Philip Glass, Henri Dutilleux, John Adams, John Zorn, Augusta Read Thomas, Steven Mackey, Adam Schoenberg, Jennifer Higdon, and Leon Kirchner, has conducted at Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music, and led multiple performances at New York City Opera's VOX Festival.

Jarvi holds a BM in Music Theory from the University of Michigan and a MM in Orchestral Conducting from Peabody, where he studied with Gustav Meier.



In memory of our ROCO friend and advocate by her friends, family, and husband Chuck to support the Conductor's travel.

## Featured Musician



#### **Brook Ferguson**, flute

Hailed by the Washington Post as "brilliantly virtuosic", flutist **Brook Ferguson** is a versatile solo and orchestral artist. First prize winner of the 2009 National Flute Association Young Artist Competition, she has performed as a concerto soloist with the Colorado Symphony, New World



Symphony, River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO), and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. She has appeared at the prestigious Marlboro Music Festival and at the Tanglewood Music Center.

Ferguson was appointed principal flutist of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra in 2010 and has served as principal flutist of ROCO since 2012. Prior to her three-year fellowship with the New World Symphony, Ferguson was the acting principal flutist of the Knoxville Symphony and the principal flutist of the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared as principal with the Grand Teton Festival Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, and Pittsburgh Symphony.

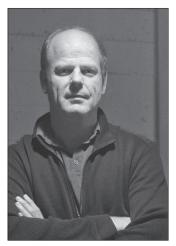
An enthusiastic proponent of new music, Brook has premiered works by Jacques Ibert, Douglas Boyd, and Michael Gandolfi.

Her performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra was commercially released on Yarlung Records, and her live performance of David Amram's Red River Valley Variations was released in 2014. Other notable solo and concerto performances include the National Flute Convention of Japan and festivals in Russia, Chile, Brazil, and Qatar.

A dedicated teacher, she is a resident artist and teacher at the Marina Piccinini International Master Class at Peabody Conservatory. Additionally, she has given master classes at numerous universities, and has served as an adjunct Professor of Flute at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Ferguson received her Master of Music from Carnegie Mellon University as a student of Jeanne Baxtresser and Alberto Almarza, and her Bachelor of Music and Graduate Performance Diploma from the Peabody Institute, studying with the Marina Piccinini. Other important teachers and influences include Doriot Anthony Dwyer, Paula Robison, and Mark Sparks.





## Featured Composer

Alexander Miller, composer



Alexander Miller, who splits his time equally between composing and performing on oboe, has written many large orchestral works including "Fireworks," performed in Carnegie Hall for the Grand Rapids Symphony's 75th anniversary, "Let Freedom Ring," which has been narrated by James Earl Jones, Danny Glover and former president Bill

Clinton, "Encaustic," a clarinet concerto depicting wax painting, and his cello concerto "Madame Bovary," inspired by Flaubert's impossible dreamer.

His music has been hailed as "stunning" (American Harp Society) "engaging and energetic" (Modesto News) and anything from "magnificent," "haunting" and "imaginative" to "intricate" and "sly and whimsical" (Grand Rapids Press). About his recent orchestral work "Scherzo Crypto," a senior critic at the San Antonio Express-News wrote that his "vibrant, propulsive" music "recalled in some ways the best mid-20th century American symphonists." When he was a resident composer at the 2016 Cabrillo Music Festival with Marin Alsop, artssf.com called him "clever, unique – a composer with something of Alan Turing within him." Most of his commissions and premieres have originated from his home orchestra in Grand Rapids where the local press calls him "oboist by title, Composer-in-Residence by default."

Miller was born in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan in 1968, then spent his childhood living in Mexico, Australia and Venezuela before returning to Michigan for high school. He completed his musical training at The Juilliard School in New York and holds B.M. and M.M. degrees in oboe performance. Shortly after graduating in 1992, he won the national audition for Assistant Principal Oboe with the Grand Rapids Symphony, a position he holds to this day.

In addition to his orchestral duties, Miller is an oboist, conductor and composer with Ensemble Montage, a chamber group dedicated to performing the myriad challenging works of the past century. He also plays with the Wünderwind Quintet and travels to elementary schools to teach children about the basic elements of building music.

In 2009, Miller received the diagnosis of a rare recurring brain tumor that forced him to undergo two brain surgeries followed by a long rehabilitation. Working his way back to a life of performing and composing is his proudest accomplishment, and he blogs about his experiences as a patient regularly, stressing the importance of humor and honesty as a path to healing. He is married to Grand Rapids Symphony violist

Mary Jane Miller and he texts her heart emojis at least once a day. His other interests include mushroom hunting, puzzles, modern art, aviation, and wine.



#### The composer writes:

The first time I made an emoji — it must have been sometime in the 1990s, during the dawnof the email age — I thought I was so clever. At the end of a sentence I typed a colon, then a hyphen, then the right half of a parentheses. It made a smiley face, albeit a sideways one with vacant eyes. Using a handful of pixels, I expressed what could have taken a paragraph had I used traditional language and grammar. It conveyed a simple emotion: "I am happy."

I wasn't prepared for the response to that email, though. The responder made an emoji of her own. It was like the one I had created, but with a slight variation. The mouth and nose were the same, but instead of a colon for the eyes, she used a semicolon. Assuming she had not missed the shift key while typing that semicolon, her emoji could mean only one thing: "Yes, you are happy, and now I am winking at you." This sent my heart aflutter. A few years later the two of us were married.

Emojis have exploded in their numbers and complexity since then, and they have become a primary means of communication in modern text messages. They are the hieroglyphs of our age, symbols that can (especially when combined) communicate complex concepts.



#### ...continued from page 9

What has fascinated me about them is how — despite their cartoonish aesthetic — they are used by adults to express genuine emotions, from bright to dark. I was texted a sullen emoji once from a friend with clinical depression. I knew what he meant, and the sadness in that emoji could not have been more serious or real. This is where my piece begins.

The five emoji movements in "ROCOmoji" tell a familiar story:



I. The aforementioned dark and lonely world:



II. Then something catches our attention:



III. Then we fall in love:



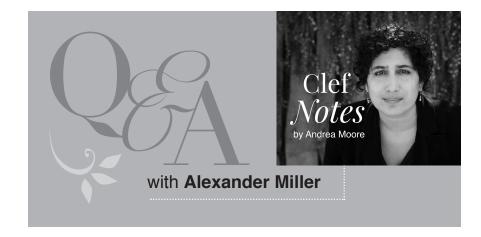
IV. Then we get greedy:



V. Then we get mad:

"ROCOmoji" was conceived as a modern concerto grosso featuring an orchestra's double reed section. The soloists are two oboes, cor anglais, two bassoons and contrabassoon, with a supporting cast of strings, harp, and percussion. I am very grateful to ROCO and its founder, Alecia Lawyer, for this commission. I was encouraged to "go boldly" when dreaming up this new piece. I did just that.

...It conveyed a simple emotion: "I am happy."



Q. You are a trained, professional oboist—how and when did you start composing? Are you entirely self-taught?

A. Yes, I am self-taught. I have yet to have my first composition lesson. Growing up, I composed music as a hobby, but I never considered it as a potential career. Once I began my studies at Juilliard (as an oboist), I would strike up hallway conversations with members of the composition and theory faculty, who encouraged me to keep trying new things. Juilliard was very fertile ground for my early experiments. By the time I graduated, my pieces were performed on the composer's forum concerts featuring composition majors.

Q. You mention that the piece was conceived as a modern concerto grosso [Editor's note: a 17th and 18th century concerto form in which a small group of soloists alternates with a larger group of instrumentalists] but how did you come to the all double-reed soloists? Had you done anything similar before this?

A. The concept of the piece — concerto grosso featuring double reeds — was actually the brainchild of ROCO's founder and principal oboe, Alecia Lawyer. I loved the idea because I had not yet written something substantial for my own instrument. When I began composing on a professional level, I sort of avoided writing for oboe. I was afraid of being typecast as a double-reed-only composer, and I now admit that was silly of me. However I got to this point, it was exhilarating finally to be able to write virtuoso passages for oboes and bassoons. I'll always have Alecia to thank for nudging me in that direction.

...continued



## ...continued from page 11

Q. Given your fascination with emoji, how did you choose these five from among all the possibilities? Were there particular moods you knew you wanted to evoke?

A. I didn't choose them exactly from the start. The way I composed this piece, I woke up each day at my usual composing time (4 a.m.) and selected a single emoji, sometimes at random. I'd study it for a few minutes, enlarged on my computer screen, then I'd begin to hear music that seemed to go well with the emoji. Then I would spend the rest of the morning sketching out a rough draft of that particular movement. So, I wrote more movements than I needed, and I have at least a half-dozen or more sketches for other emoji movements. If I deemed them not especially interesting as stand-alone pieces of music, I set them aside. Once I knew I had five good emoji movements, I spent the next month refining the orchestration and getting the musical pacing right.

Q. It's interesting that you chose the sounds of a casino to represent "greed;" can you tell us about that decision?

A. Slot machines are fun, but would they be fun without the money? At the end of the day, someone is standing there, doing nothing but dropping in coins while hoping to become instantly rich. Seeking an enormous payout from a tiny amount of effort is one way to define greed. By the way, I don't think there's anything wrong with adults playing slots for fun from time to time. But the way casino sounds are designed to hook you in and keep you playing in the hopes of a big dollar payout makes them a perfect fit for this particular emoji.

O. What recent or upcoming projects are you especially excited about?

A. There is a lot on my plate right now. My brass quintet "Dark Mirror," inspired by film noir and detective fiction, was just premiered. And I'll be flying out to Seattle right after the ROCO concerts to hear my clarinet concerto "Encaustic" (depicting hot wax painting) performed at the Museum of Glass. Also, I just got started on a large work for orchestra and chorus using text derived from Beethoven's deeply personal *Heiligenstadt Testament*.



Clef Notes
by Andrea Moore



The English composer **Gustav Holst** is probably most widely known for his orchestral piece, *The Planets*. Many people who have played in a concert band may also know his two Suites, from 1909 and 1911, which are foundations of the band repertoire. Holst studied composition and trombone at the Royal College of Music, and after some orchestral playing as a trombonist, took a job as head of music at St. Paul's Girls' School in 1905, where he remained. His compositional style, while eclectic and not attached to any particular school, was influenced by the English folksong revival most associated with his contemporary, Ralph Vaughan Williams. Holst used traditional songs in some of his music, but also—as with the band Suites—had a gift for creating new music that sounded as though folksong were its basis.

Holst wrote two suites for string orchestra: *St. Paul's Suite* (1913), written for the opening of a new music wing at the school, and *Brook Green Suite*, a gift to the school written in Holst's last months. He was quite ill in his last years, but continued to compose almost until his death in 1934. The opening movement is lyrical, with an almost constantly running series of descending lines under the melodies. It is fairly repetitive, and in its final measures repeats the familiar melody once more in an ever-quieter ensemble pizzicato. The second movement, Air, is an excellent example of Holst's ability to write in a "folk-like" style, and the final movement, "Dance," was supposedly based on music for dance that Holst heard once in Sicily. The piece's origins in a pedagogical setting are clear from the way that melodic passages are equitably passed around the ensemble, and while the piece is scored for string orchestra, it has optional parts for flute, oboe, and clarinet; it is this version on today's program.



# Clef Notes by Andrea Moore



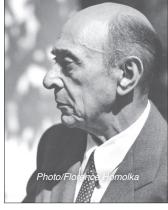
Saverio Mercadante was born in Altamura, in southern Italy, in 1795. Although his childhood was marked by instability and poverty, he showed early musical promise, and was able to enter the Conservatory in Naples at age 13. There he studied counterpoint, violin, flute, and voice, eventually taking up composition as well. By the age of 18, he had already written a number of pieces, including this flute concerto. Mercadante's compositional sights were also set on opera, however, and his first opera premiered in 1819. He wrote dozens of operas during the course of his career; the political complexities of his lifetime meant that he relied on patronage from Milan and Rome when things were too unstable for him in Naples. He also wrote a significant number of orchestral and chamber works, many of the latter emphasizing the flute.

The solo writing in this piece is highly idiomatic, reflecting Mercadante's study of the flute, and calls for a virtuoso soloist. The piece opens with a fairly extended orchestral introduction, setting a dramatic tone, which the soloist elaborates in a virtuosic first entrance. Soloist and orchestra continue to alternate throughout the movement, with the orchestra providing fairly sparse accompaniment when the soloist is playing (perhaps a matter of balance). The short second movement opens with another dramatic orchestral statement, which quickly gives way to long, lyrical lines from the soloist. This piece—one of the few in Mercadante's catalog that is still regularly performed—is especially known for its final movement, Rondo Russo. The movement stays close to its "Russian" theme, and also gives the soloist plenty of virtuosic passages, along with a now-expected dose of orchestral drama, and regular shifts between major and minor modes.



#### Arnold Schoenberg

Verklärte Nacht ("Transfigured Night")



While **Arnold Schoenberg's** music is often associated with the "twelve-tone" system of composition he devised, his own musical legacy

was late German tonality. Born in 1874, Schoenberg wrote this piece in less than a month in 1899, when he was only 25 and still very much under the influence of German Romanticism. In 1917, Schoenberg arranged the original version, for string sextet, for string orchestra.

The piece is an untexted setting of a poem by Richard Dehmel. This poem, of the same title, tells the story of a woman who walks in the woods with her new lover, and confesses that she—wanting to experience motherhood—had become pregnant with another man's child before meeting her current lover. The lover, after hesitating, responds by saying that the love between them will transform the child into his own—thus both the night and the child are "transfigured."

This piece has musical elements of both sides of a late 19th century debate, an aesthetic divide exemplified by Brahms, on the one side, and Wagner on the other. While the details of the debates are too extensive to recount here, they had to do with questions of Beethoven's legacy (who was his true heir?) and musical progress (had instrumental music exhausted itself? Or was it still possible to advance musical art without text, or was opera the only truly progressive next step?) While Schoenberg was more or less a Brahmsian, his works from the previous few years oriented toward "pure" instrumental music, once he discovered Dehmel's poetry in 1898 he was inspired, and did find cause to include extra-musical or textual elements in his work.

The poem consists of five stanzas, a structure that Schoenberg loosely follows. The introduction opens with a pulse that suggests footsteps—the lovers are walking through the woods—and sets the scene of the dark forest. The confession stanza is next; preceded by increasingly agitated music, the viola marks the entrance of the woman's voice as she tells her story. The third stanza is agitated again, as she walks "with a clumsy step," gazing at the moon and anxiously waiting for his response. When it comes, her lover's reply is reassuring, and marks the beginning of one of the piece's fundamental actions: a shift from D minor to D major. The piece closes with the night transformed around the couple, represented by shimmering arpeggios. Here, the poem's arc is resolved musically, as the piece has illustrated the "transfiguration" of the line "two people walk through bleak, cold woods" into its ecstatic resolution: "Two people walk through exalted, shining night."

#### Verklärte Nacht

Zwei Menschen gehn durch kahlen, kalten Hain; der Mond läuft mit, sie schaun hinein. Der Mond läuft über hohe Eichen; kein Wölkchen trübt das Himmelslicht. in das die schwarzen Zacken reichen. Die Stimme eines Weibes spricht: "Ich trag ein Kind, und nit von Dir, ich geh in Sünde neben Dir. Ich hab mich schwer an mir vergangen. Ich glaubte nicht mehr an ein Glück und hatte doch ein schwer Verlangen nach Lebensinhalt, nach Mutterglück und Pflicht; da hab ich mich erfrecht, da ließ ich schaudernd mein Geschlecht von einem fremden Mann umfangen. und hab mich noch dafür gesegnet. Nun hat das Leben sich gerächt: nun bin ich Dir, o Dir, begegnet." Sie geht mit ungelenkem Schritt. Sie schaut empor; der Mond läuft mit. Ihr dunkler Blick ertrinkt in Licht. Die Stimme eines Mannes spricht: "Das Kind, das Du empfangen hast, sei Deiner Seele keine Last, o sieh, wie klar das Weltall schimmert! Es ist ein Glanz um alles her: Du treibst mit mir auf kaltem Meer, doch eine eigne Wärme flimmert von Dir in mich, von mir in Dich. Die wird das fremde Kind verklären. Du wirst es mir, von mir gebären; Du hast den Glanz in mich gebracht, Du hast mich selbst zum Kind gemacht." Er faßt sie um die starken Hüften. Ihr Atem küßt sich in den Lüften. Zwei Menschen gehn durch hohe, helle Nacht.

Arnold Schoenberg, by Egon Schiele 1917

Two people are walking through a bare, cold wood; the moon keeps pace with them and draws their gaze. The moon moves along above tall oak trees, there is no wisp of cloud to obscure the radiance to which the black, jagged tips reach up. A woman's voice speaks: "I am carrying a child, and not by you. I am walking here with you in a state of sin. I have offended grievously against myself. I despaired of happiness, and yet I still felt a grievous longing for life's fullness, for a mother's joys and duties; and so I sinned, and so I yielded, shuddering, my sex to the embrace of a stranger, and even thought myself blessed. Now life has taken its revenge, and I have met you, met you." She walks on, stumbling. She looks up; the moon keeps pace. Her dark gaze drowns in light. A man's voice speaks: "Do not let the child you have conceived be a burden on your soul. Look, how brightly the universe shines! Splendour falls on everything around, you are voyaging with me on a cold sea, but there is the glow of an inner warmth from you in me, from me in you. That warmth will transfigure the stranger's child, and you bear it me, begot by me. You have transfused me with splendour, you have made a child of me." He puts an arm about her strong hips. Their breath embraces in the air. Two people walk on through the high, bright night.

(English translation by Mary Whittall)





ROCO is excited to announce our new Managing Director,
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The musicians, staff and board of ROCO are forever grateful to **Scott Baxter** for his dedicated, thoughtful and wise counsel as ROCO's board member and as our Board President. Scott has seen ROCO grow exponentially under his governance terms and has brought many a new ROCO fan to our halls, including his own Frost Bank. Thank you, Scott, for all of your work. And thank you, Betsy, for your enthusiastic and joyful presence at all of our concerts. Here's to many more relationships built on the language of music.



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ROCOrooters is a music education and childcare program that operates during and after our 5 o'clock concerts on Saturdays at The Church of St. John the Divine. You enjoy the concert and have a date night, while your kids get music education from a highly trained music teacher, hear part of a fantastic concert live and then watch movies and eat pizza under the watch of certified and bonded childcare workers.

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#### "Attitude of Gratitude" -

My husband, Larry, adopted this as our family motto years ago.

ROCO has blossomed so much these 12 years due to the support, work and love of so many people. In fact, the list has now become too long to include. I shall just say my gratitude grows daily.

Thank you!

-- Alecia



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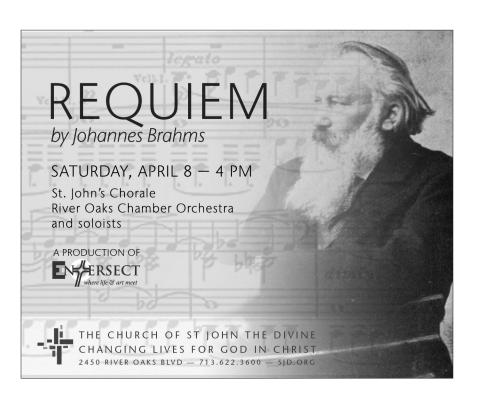
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