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## BELLAIRE

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Multi-sensory music experiences for multi-generations

By CYNTHIA LESCALLEET

Going to a River Oaks Chamber Orchestra concert is like going to an art museum that allows visitors to touch and deconstruct the fine art on display.

The interactive, family-friendly approach has earned ROCO a loyal — and growing — audience who likes music as much as the approachable concert format.

ROCO entertains and informs. It fosters a relationship between the audience and musicians they come to know through mid-concert meetings and a magazine-style program full of tidbits about what's being played and by whom.

"Mozart is dead. We're not," quipped River Oaks Chamber Orchestra founder Alecia Lawyer, a oboist. "Watch us."

With an eye to being part of a night out rather than the entire one, ROCO concerts are held at 5 p.m. During performances, the house lights stay on so people can read the concert guide.

Plus, ROCO has childcare, a rare feature for a performing arts group. Older children receive a 20-minute class about the concert before joining the audience.

"We obviously hit a nerve," said Lawyer, who lives in West University Place. Attendance is "exploding," she said. "We are overwhelmed by community support."

As ROCO heads into its third season, Lawyer noticed the schedule of the 40-member professional performing arts group is a little deceptive.

While the formal concerts continue to be offered three times a year, the number of performances of the concerts has increased.

Meanwhile, subgroups of ROCO musicians perform in other small venues under the ROCO banner.

At ROCO's "Taste the Music" events, for example, musicians perform compositions from the region of the wines being served. The next pairings of wine and music are 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Jan. 11 and April 10 at venues to be determined.

Through the "ROCO Salon" program, ROCO musicians perform small concerts — not background music — in homes.

And with "Upstairs with ROCO," donors hear informal performances in ROCO's office.

Lawyer said ROCO, like many smaller performing arts groups, is responding to people's interest in more intimate music experiences.

"We're trying to break the mold without damaging the product," she said of her group's approach to chamber music.

Having fulfilled her initial goal of starting a small chamber orchestra, Lawyer now hopes to make ROCO a full-time one, she said.

### **ROCO season opener**

● **WHEN:** 5 p.m. Nov. 10,

● **WHERE:** St. John the Divine, 2450 River Oaks Blvd.

● **WHAT:** Conductor Lavard Skou Larsen brings his Brazilian background and Salzburg experiences to a program of Mozart and a few unannounced pieces.

● **MORE INFORMATION:** Call 713-665-2700 or visit [www.rocohouston.org](http://www.rocohouston.org).