

MAJOR MUSIC

A standing ovation and a  
\$500-a-plate dinner at a  
swanky River Oaks club?  
Yes, ROCO can do it all

BY [JOEL LUKS](#) 10.1.13 | 4:14 pm

Leave it to the [River Oaks Chamber Orchestra](#), better known as ROCO (rhymes with loco) to the cool kids, to trigger a thundering standing ovation after a sold-out concert of music that its audience had not ever heard before.

The program — including a Houston premiere by Asian-American composer [Huang Ruo](#) and a world premiere by Indian-American composer [Reena Esmail](#) over the weekend — sounded the official downbeat of the ensemble's ninth season, a journey that was praised at the group's first fundraiser dinner the same evening, themed "[ROCO on the ROCCS](#)," at the River Oaks Country Club.

The prowess of guest maestro **Mei-Ann Chen** to muse a boisterous performance was the talk of the town. Founder and principal oboist **Alecia Lawyer** took it all in, overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from the 200 classical music buffs who paid \$500 and up for the surf-and-turf three-course menu.

Chairs **April Lykos** and **John Bradshaw Jr.** applauded honoree **Janet Moore**, one of the trio of influentials who founded the ensemble in 2005. In a short address, Moore

remarked that she admired Lawyer's ability to "change people's lives for the better."

To foster connection between patrons and artists, each table was hosted by a couple of musicians. Cue cards with conversation starters furthered ROCO's emphasis on the people — not only the music — as the key to the ensemble singing a sweet melody of success. A brass fanfare heralded a game of musical chairs that kept the chatty throng getting to know even more lively musicians.

Spotted in the crowd were **Harvin Moore, Kelli and Eddy Blanton, Cabrina and Steven Owsley, Marianne Kah, Kathleen Laws, Beck Redden, Connie and Tony Pfeiffer, Jo Ann and Bob Fry, Kit and Bob Gwin, Betsy and Scott Baxter, Mimi Lloyd, Kathleen Holt and Sarah and Jeff McParland.**