



Media Contacts:

James Rowland, 713-665-2700, james@rocohouston.org

Alecia Lawyer, 713-665-2700, alecia@rocohouston.org

ROCO Announces Multiple World Premieres for 10th Anniversary Season

2014 – 2015 Season is titled Great Expectations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 25, 2014



HOUSTON — [River Oaks Chamber Orchestra](#) (ROCO) celebrates its 10th Anniversary Season in 2014 – 2015 with the announcement of nine more world premiere commissions, a whole new concert series, new names for its existing series and the return of some of its most revered musicians and collaborators. The season is titled *Great Expectations* “because it refers to the high expectations we have had for ROCO since inception,” said [Alecia Lawyer](#), ROCO Founder and Artistic Director, “and the higher goals we have set for ourselves in our second decade.” The title also refers to a number of literary themes that will run throughout much of the season.

The literary themes are most evident in the four new, world premiere compositions for the full orchestra that ROCO commissioned for its 10th season. In September, ROCO will premiere a commission by [Maria Newman](#) based on the children’s book *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*. Ms. Newman, the daughter of multiple Academy Award-winning composer and conductor Alfred Newman, sister to Thomas Newman and cousin to famed songwriter Randy Newman, is an award winning composer of classical music and a critically acclaimed violinist, violist and pianist. In November, ROCO premieres a work by Emmy Award winning composer [Anthony DiLorenzo](#) based on the [Lewis Carroll](#) poem *Jabberwocky*. Anthony is a talented trumpet player who has performed with ROCO the past two seasons and is known as a master film composer, having composed over 80 film trailers for movies such as *Toy Story*.

ROCO was invited to join a national consortium of the top chamber orchestras in the country for its February commission. [New Century Chamber Orchestra](#) in San Francisco and [A Far Cry](#) from Boston partnered with ROCO to commission a major new piece for chamber orchestra by [Derek Bermel](#) in the first of a potentially fruitful coalition of peer organizations whose goal is to further the chamber orchestra repertoire. Creative collaborations such as these are part of ROCO’s mission. “We are committed to not only making classical music feel alive in how we present music and connect with our audience,” said Ms. Lawyer, “but we are committed to physically keeping it alive through the creation of contemporary music by living composers. This is why we’ve renamed our orchestra series *ROCO Alive in Concert* starting in our 10th season.”



For its final major commission in 2014 – 2015 and its 47th overall since it started in 2005, ROCO turns to [Pierre Jalbert](#), Professor of Composition and Theory at the [Shepherd School of Music](#) and one of the Artistic Directors of [Musiqua](#). Jalbert completes the literary theme for the season by basing his composition on poetry, including works by great American poet [Walt Whitman](#). At the suggestion of Mr. Jalbert, ROCO welcomes highly-acclaimed mezzo-soprano [Sasha Cooke](#) for this very special *ROCO Alive in Concert* collaboration.



Other major artists that are included in its 10th Anniversary Season are [Brian Lewis](#) and [Anne-Marie McDermott](#). Mr. Lewis's performance is a homecoming as he performed with ROCO as concertmaster and soloist for their first seven seasons. He will return as soloist on the Newman piece for the season-opening concert in September. Ms. McDermott also returns to ROCO, this time to perform the Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 1* in November. Also returning to ROCO for that performance will be conductor [Alastair Willis](#), in his fifth turn leading the orchestra. Other conductors scheduled to take the baton in 2014 – 2015 are [Victor Yampolsky](#) in September and [David Danzmayr](#) in April 2015. For its annual conductorless concert in February, ROCO welcomes international soloist and conductor [Cho-Liang Lin](#) as concertmaster and soloist for a Valentine-themed concert that includes the Derek Bermel world premiere commission and works by Elgar, Dvorak and Schubert.

Along with the full chamber orchestra series, ROCO continues its more intimate chamber ensemble series featuring individual ROCO musicians, repackaged in 2014 – 2015 as *ROCO Unchambered*. “Unchambered reflects the wide range of programming that will be presented at our chamber series concerts,” said [Suzanne LeFevre](#), Associate Artistic Director, “and embodies the true spirit of the series as we plan to explore various genres alongside the chamber music itself and develop new unexpected collaborations. It also is a reflection of our new performance space next season.” Starting in 2014 – 2015, *ROCO Unchambered* will take place at The Vanderbilt, a new special event center near downtown Houston. The Vanderbilt is inspired by the design of New York's Grand Central Station and will provide unique spaces for ROCO to perform, customized for each group's size and musical theme.



ROCO will continue its tradition of *ROCO Connections* concerts, which are unique collaborations with dynamic partners throughout the community. For its 10th Season, ROCO will continue its partnership with [Bayou Bend](#) for a *Yuletide Concert* and with the [Houston Zoo](#) for three performances of *Peter and the Wolf*. ROCO will also perform five more world premiere commissioned compositions at its annual *Musical and Literary Ofrenda* at [Lawndale Art Center](#) on October 28. The *Ofrenda* celebrates [Día de los Muertos](#) with musical offerings composed by [Musiqua](#), literary offerings written by [Inprint](#) and retablos hung on the Lawndale walls.

Special for its 10th Season, ROCO introduces a new concert series outside of its two subscription seasons, called *ROCO Limited Engagements*. These concerts offer programming in between the full orchestra and small ensemble performances for which ROCO has become known. The first *ROCO Limited Engagement* is called *A Tribute to Billie Holiday* scheduled on March 26, 2015 at The Vanderbilt. In honor of the 100th birthday of [Billie Holiday](#) in 2015, ROCO welcomes heralded New Orleans jazz vocalist [Stephanie Jordan](#) to lead ROCO musicians and a rhythm section in classical and jazz music that influenced Billie Holiday and embodies the music of her era.

To conclude the season, ROCO performs its second *ROCO Limited Engagement* on May 21, 2015 at the [Rothko Chapel](#). For this concert, ROCO will perform a very personal and moving version of [Mahler's Symphony No. 4](#), orchestrated for just 13 musicians and requiring the virtuosity of every musician involved. This performance will symbolize a decade of creative and audience growth for ROCO while providing a transcendent space for ROCO to reflect upon its past and cast a light upon its promising future.

Subscriptions to *ROCO Alive in Concert* and *ROCO Unchambered* or a ROCO Combo for both series are available starting Friday, April 25. Subscription prices range from \$50 - \$200, with discounted tickets available for Seniors and Students. Single concert tickets will become available starting August 1. Tickets and more information are available online at www.rocohouston.org or by calling 713-665-2700.

ROCO Alive in Concert

Once Upon a Time

Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014, 5:00 pm The Church of St. John the Divine
Sunday, Sept. 28, 2014, 8:00 pm Miller Outdoor Theatre (*free*)

Victor Yampolsky, conductor
Brian Lewis, violin
Sandy Yamamoto, concertmaster
Maria Newman, composer

World Premiere composition by Maria Newman based on *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*.
Rossini *Italian in Algiers*
Mozart *Symphony No. 41, Jupiter Symphony*
Britten *Suite on English Folk Tunes*

Serious Fun

Saturday, Nov. 8, 2014, 5:00 pm, The Church of St. John the Divine
Sunday, Nov. 9, 2014, 4:00 pm, The Centrum

Alastair Willis, conductor
Anne-Marie McDermott, piano
Anton Miller, concertmaster
Anthony DiLorenzo, composer

World Premiere composition by Anthony DiLorenzo based on *Jabberwocky*
Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 1*
Mendelssohn *Overture "The Fair Melusina"*
Vaughan Williams *Overture to the Wasps*

Mutual Affection – Conductorless!

Friday, Feb. 13, 2015, 7:30 pm, Grace Presbyterian Church

Saturday, Feb. 14, 2015, 5:00 pm, The Church of St. John the Divine

Cho-Liang Lin, concertmaster and soloist

Derek Bermel, composer

World Premiere composition by Derek Bermel as part of chamber orchestra composition consortium

Schubert *Symphony No. 5*

Elgar *Salut d'Amour*

Dvorak *Romance for Violin and Orchestra*

Notes to be Written

Thursday, April 23, 2015, 7:30 pm, The Church of St. John the Divine

David Danzmayr, conductor

Sasha Cooke, mezzo soprano

Ertan Torgul, concertmaster

Pierre Jalbert, composer

World Premiere composition from Pierre Jalbert inspired by the poetry of Walt Whitman and Stephen Foster

Mendelssohn *Symphony No. 5, Reformation*

ROCO Unchambered

Walk with Me

Sunday, Nov. 23, 2014 5:00 pm, The Vanderbilt

Featuring jazz and spiritual music for trombone and piano

Thomas Hulten, trombone

Divas and Ballerinas

Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015, 5:00 pm, The Vanderbilt

Featuring suites from the Opera and Ballet

Tawnya Popoff, viola

Six Degrees of Tolstoy

Sunday, Feb. 22, 2015, 5:00 pm, The Vanderbilt

Featuring music that influenced Tolstoy and music that was influenced by his writing

Maureen Nelson, violin

The Little Prince

Sunday, April 12, 2015, 5:00 pm, The Vanderbilt

Featuring *Le Petite Prince* by Dan Kellogg

Matt Dane, viola

Christina Jennings, flute

ROCO Limited Engagements

Tribute to Billie Holiday

Thursday, March 26, 2015, 8:00 pm, The Vanderbilt

Featuring jazz vocalist Stephanie Jordan, ROCO musicians and a rhythm section

Mahler's Fourth

Thursday, May 21, 2015, 7:30 pm, Rothko Chapel

Featuring a special 13-piece orchestration of Mahler's *Symphony No. 4*

Alan Yamamoto, conductor

Venues:

The Church of St. John the Divine
2450 River Oaks Blvd., Houston, 77019

Miller Outdoor Theatre
6000 Hermann Park Drive, Houston, 77030

The Centrum
6823 Cypresswood Dr., Spring, 77379

The Vanderbilt
2500 Summer St., Houston, 77007

Grace Presbyterian Church
10221 Ella Lee Lane, Houston, 77042

The Rothko Chapel
3900 Yupon, Houston, 77006

Artistic Bios

Alecia Lawyer, Founder and Artistic Director



[Alecia Lawyer](#) is the Founder, Artistic Director and Principal Oboist of the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. Ms. Lawyer was named a finalist for Texas Musician of the Year (along with Willie Nelson) and was listed as one of Houston's Top 50 Most Influential Women 2010. She has received numerous awards, including the Gutsy Gal Award from Houston Woman Magazine, the Sigma Alpha Iota Musician of the Year, and the Outstanding Chamber Orchestra Founder from the Houston Chronicle. She regularly presents her Entrepreneurial model and dynamic ideas to conservatories, universities and music festivals around the US such as Yale, SMU, Julliard, Round Top and Texas Music Festivals, showing ROCO as a case study for community-specific orchestral building.

Suzanne LeFevre, Associate Artistic Director



Violist [Suzanne LeFevre](#) has led an active orchestral career and chamber music life playing in numerous orchestras and ensembles in the US, as well as Europe, including: Principal Viola of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Assistant Principal Viola of the Charlotte Symphony, Principal Viola of Mercury Baroque. She has played with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, and New Haven Symphony. Suzanne has participated in the Grand Teton Music Festival, Peninsula Music Festival, Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival, Madison Chamber Music Festival, and Colorado Music Festival. After spending 20 months in Antwerp Belgium, in 2005, Suzanne moved to Houston Texas, where she is currently a violist and Associate artistic director of River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. She is tenured member of Houston Grand Opera since 2005. Suzanne serves as an affiliate artist of viola at the University of Houston, Moores School of Music.



Maria Newman, composer

Recognized and Commended by the United States Congress, [Maria Newman](#) is an award-winning composer, violinist, violist and pianist. Newman has become a major symbol in modern classical music and makes her living from commissions and performance. Newman's scintillating and highly discussed works represent a range of genres, from orchestral to chamber, and from choral and vocal to restored classic silent film. Ms. Newman currently holds the Louis and Annette Kaufman Composition Chair at the Montgomery Arts House for Music and Architecture in Malibu, California.



Anthony DiLorenzo, composer

Emmy Award-winning composer [Anthony DiLorenzo](#) grew up in Stoughton Massachusetts. His music is performed throughout the world by symphony orchestras and chamber groups, including The San Francisco Symphony, The New World Symphony, The Louisiana Philharmonic, The Utah Symphony, The Tokyo Symphony, and The Boston Pops Orchestra. Burning River Brass under the direction of Feza Zweifel, regularly performs Anthony's works in their concerts.



Derek Bermel, composer

Described by the Toronto Star as an "eclectic with wide open ears", Grammy-nominated composer and clarinetist [Derek Bermel](#) has been widely hailed for his creativity, theatricality, and virtuosity. Bermel's works draw from a rich variety of musical genres, including classical, jazz, pop, rock, blues, folk, and gospel. Hands-on experience with music of cultures around the world has become part of the fabric and force of his compositional language. Bermel holds B.A. and D.M.A. degrees from Yale University and the University of Michigan.



Pierre Jalbert, composer

[Pierre Jalbert](#) is one of the most highly regarded American composers of his generation, earning widespread notice for his richly colored and superbly crafted scores. Focusing primarily on instrumental works, Jalbert has developed a musical language that is engaging, expressive, and deeply personal. Among his many honors are the Rome Prize, the BBC Masterprize, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Stoeger Award, given biennially "in recognition of significant contributions to the chamber music repertory," and a 2010 American Academy of Arts and Letters award.



Victor Yampolsky, conductor

Esteemed teacher, conductor, and violinist, [Victor Yampolsky](#) serves as Carol F. and Arthur L. Rice Jr. University Professor in Music Performance at the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music; Music Director of the Peninsula Music Festival in Door County, Wisconsin; Music Director Emeritus of the Omaha Symphony, as well as the Honorary Director of the Scotia Festival of Music in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Born in the Soviet Union in 1942, Yampolsky—the son of the great pianist Vladimir Yampolsky—studied violin with the legendary David Oistrakh at the Moscow Conservatory (1961– 1966).



Alastair Willis, conductor

Grammy-nominated conductor [Alastair Willis](#) is currently the Music Director of the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. Previous positions include Principal Guest Conductor with the Florida Orchestra's Coffee Concert series, Associate Conductor of the Seattle Symphony, Assistant Conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony and Pops Orchestras, and Music Director of the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra. In the past few seasons, Willis has guest conducted orchestras around the world including the Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony and more.



David Danzmayr, conductor

Described by 'The Herald' as "extremely good, concise, clear, incisive and expressive" [David Danzmayr](#) is widely regarded as one of the most talented and exciting European conductors of the younger generation. David is in his second season as Music Director of the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra in Chicago, and has recently been appointed as Music Director of the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra. He has won 2nd prize at the 2013 International Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition in addition to being a prize winner at the International Malko Conducting Competition.



Alan Yamamoto, conductor

[Alan Yamamoto](#) began his tenure as Resident Conductor of the Charlotte Symphony in the 2003-2004 season, appointed to the post by Christof Perick following a season-long national search. Yamamoto appears as Conductor on the Classics and Baroque & Beyond Concert series, leads the Symphony's Lollipops series and Education Concerts for children, and conducts for the Symphony's collaborations with North Carolina Dance Theatre. He also leads the Classics series Pre-Concert Talks and other education initiatives.



Cho-Liang Lin, concertmaster and soloist

Violinist [Cho-Liang Lin](#) is lauded the world over for the eloquence of his playing and for the superb musicianship that marks his performances. In a concert career spanning the globe for more than thirty years, he is equally at home with orchestra, in recital, playing chamber music, and in a teaching studio. He was invited to join the faculty of the Juilliard School in 1991. More recently he was appointed professor of violin at the Shepherd School of Music. Mr. Lin has been Music Director of La Jolla Society's Summerfest since 2001.



Brian Lewis, soloist

One of the most versatile and charismatic violinists on the current scene, [Brian Lewis](#) is an exceptionally dedicated and gifted performer whose passionate artistry has been heard and embraced around the world. "There are a lot of fine violinists on the concert stage today, but few can match Lewis for an honest virtuosity that supremely serves the music," reports the Topeka Capital-Journal. Acclaimed performances include concerto debuts in both New York's Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall, as well as performances with the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Berlin (Germany), among many others.



Anne Marie-McDermott, soloist

In a career that has spanned over 25 years, American pianist [Anne-Marie McDermott](#) has played concertos, recitals and chamber music in hundreds of cities throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. The breadth of her repertoire matches that of her instrument, spanning from Bach, Haydn and Beethoven to Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev and Scriabin to works by today's most influential composers -- Aaron Jay Kernis, Steven Hartke, Joan Tower and Charles Wuorinen, among them. As an Artistic Director, Ms. McDermott leads the Ocean Reef Chamber Music Festival in Florida and the Avila Chamber Music Celebration in Curacao.



Sasha Cooke, soloist

Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano [Sasha Cooke](#) caused a sensation last summer at San Francisco Opera in the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*. "With her soaring and warm voice, crystalline diction and regal yet endearing presence, Sasha Cooke as Mary is the glory of the production" (*San Francisco Examiner*). Acclaimed for her performances in symphony, opera, chamber music and recital, Sasha Cooke has been called "the luminous standout" (*New York Times*) and "equal parts poise, radiance and elegant directness" (*Opera News*).



Sandy Yamamoto, concertmaster

Violinist [Sandy Yamamoto](#) has dazzled audiences in concert performances around the globe for the past three decades as a soloist and as a member of the Miró Quartet. Ms. Yamamoto began her violin studies at the age of 4. At 11, she made her solo debut with the North Carolina Symphony and has since appeared with orchestras throughout the US and Europe to critical acclaim. Ms. Yamamoto was also invited to be a guest speaker and role model in New York City for the winners of the 2003 Glamour Magazine's Top Ten College Women.



Anton Miller, concertmaster

Since giving his Carnegie Hall concerto debut in 1992 with the New Chamber Orchestra of New York, American violinist [Anton Miller](#) has appeared throughout the United States and abroad as a soloist, chamber musician, recitalist, and pedagogue. Miller gave the world premier performance in Beijing, China of Xiaogang Ye's *Last Paradise* for violin and orchestra. He has made several appearances in Brazil to tour Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, and Brahms Concertos with the Orchestra Sinfonica de Campinas, and has performed recital tours in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, and China.



Ertan Torgul, concertmaster

Balancing a tremendously busy career of recital engagements, a full calendar of chamber music concerts and until recently holding the post of Associate Concertmaster with the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra, violinist [Ertan Torgul](#) is a well rounded and much sought after musician. Before leaving his post in September 2012 he has been serving as Acting Concertmaster for four seasons. As a soloist and Guest Concertmaster he has performed with numerous orchestras around the country including San Francisco, Indianapolis, Sacramento, Phoenix, Tucson and San Antonio among many others.

About ROCO

ROCO is a professional chamber orchestra of 40 select musicians, distinguished guest conductors and dynamic composers who come together from all over the world to present engaging performances of classical and original compositions. Founded in 2005 by oboist, Alecia Lawyer, ROCO has been called the most fun you can have with serious music. www.rocohouston.org

###