



## **ROCO Celebrates Asia in Season Opening Concert**

***Mei-Ann Chen returns to lead orchestra in concert influenced by Asian cultures and themes.***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**August 13, 2013, HOUSTON, TX.** On September 27 – 29, the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra (ROCO) begins its 2013 – 2014 season with a concert titled *ROCO Celebrates Asia* featuring compositions and composers strongly influenced by various Asian cultures. “The incredible amount of variety in classical music always astounds me,” says Founder, Artistic Director and Principal Oboist Alecia Lawyer. “In September, we explore Asian cultures from surprising musical angles yet, as with all things ROCO, our focus is on relationships and connections.”

Mei-Ann Chen will return to Houston once again to lead ROCO as guest conductor in its first full orchestra concert of the season themed *Around the World in ROCO Ways*. Ms. Chen will be joined by tenor Zach Averyt and ROCO horn soloist Danielle Kuhlmann performing the Britten *Serenade*. The evening will also include *Folks Songs for Orchestra*, arranged especially for ROCO by composer Huang Ro as well as a world premiere/commission called *Teen Murti*, written by Indian-American composer Reena Esmail. Rounding out each evening’s performance will be the Bartok *Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra*.

ROCO begins its ninth season-opening weekend Friday, September 27 at the Asia Society Texas Center where it will perform for the first time ever in the Fayed Sarofim Grand Hall. On Saturday, September 28, ROCO plays in its home venue, The Church of St. John the Divine, before returning to Conroe to perform at the Crighton Theatre on Sunday evening, September 29. Start times and ticket prices vary by venue. Specific information and tickets are available on [www.rocohouston.org](http://www.rocohouston.org).

### ***ROCO Celebrates Asia***

#### **Friday, September 27, 2013**

7:30 pm, at Asia Society Texas Center  
1370 Southmore Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77004  
(713) 496-9901

Admission is \$25 general admission at [www.asiasociety.org/texas](http://www.asiasociety.org/texas) or call 713-496-9901

*In partnership with the Asia Society Texas Center*

#### **Saturday, September 28, 2013**

5:00 pm, at The Church of St. John the Divine  
2450 River Oaks Blvd. at Westheimer, with valet parking available  
Houston, TX 77019

Tickets are \$25 general admission, \$10 for students at [www.rocohouston.org](http://www.rocohouston.org) or 713-665-2700

#### **Sunday, September 29, 2013**

7:30 pm, at the Crighton Theatre  
234 North Main St.  
Conroe, TX 77301  
(936) 441-7469

Admission is \$28 for adults, \$18 for students, available at [www.crightontheatre.org](http://www.crightontheatre.org) or call 936-441-7469

*Presented by the Montgomery County Performing Arts Society*

## Program

**Bela Bartok** *Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra*

**Huang Ruo** *Folksongs for Orchestra* (ROCO arrangement)

**Benjamin Britten** *Serenade*

**Reena Esmail** *Teen Marti* (World Premiere)

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor

Zach Averyt, tenor

Danielle Kuhlmann, horn

**Mei-Ann Chen** is currently in her third year as Music Director of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Born in Taiwan but a resident of the U.S., she is also the Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta. During this time, the impact of her energy, enthusiasm and high level of music-making has been felt by both of these orchestras, their audiences and entire communities, as well. The League of American Orchestras recognized this fact by choosing her for the prestigious Helen M. Thompson Award at their 2012 national conference in Dallas.



**Zach Averyt** is a Texas-born tenor who made his operatic debut in 2001 as Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and is currently in his second season with *Ars Lyrica Houston*. Averyt appears frequently in leading roles with Houston's Opera in the Heights, where he returns to sing Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* in January of 2014. Mr. Averyt holds degrees from both the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston, and was a 2013 Emerging Artist with Opera New Jersey. He currently lives and teaches privately in Houston and has served on the faculty of the American Festival of the Arts.



**Reena Esmail** is an Indian-American composer who enjoys working in both the Western and Hindustani (North Indian) classical music idioms. Esmail holds a bachelors degree in composition from The Juilliard School, and a masters degree from the Yale School of Music. She has won the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and two ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards. She will return to Yale to begin her doctoral degree in the fall of 2012.



**Huang Ruo** was recently awarded First Prize by the prestigious Luxembourg International Composition Prize and was cited by the New Yorker as "one of the most intriguing of the new crop of Asian-American composers." His vibrant and inventive musical voice draws equal inspiration from Chinese folk, Western avant-garde, rock, and jazz to create a seamless, organic integration using a compositional technique he calls "dimensionalism." His writing spans from orchestra, chamber music, opera, theater, and modern dance, to sound installation, multi-media, experimental improvisation, folk rock, and film.



**Danielle Kuhlmann** has traveled the world, performing in symphony orchestras and chamber music concerts throughout North America, Europe, Asia and Australia. After growing up in Seattle, Washington, she completed her undergraduate studies at the Juilliard School and has performed with the Seattle Symphony, Houston Symphony, American Ballet Theater and with the Brooklyn, Long Island and Westchester Philharmonics. She also is a very proud member of the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra.



\*\*\*\*\*

#### **About ROCO**

ROCO is a professional chamber orchestra of 40 all-star musicians, distinguished by creative collaborations of guest conductors and ROCO soloists 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 is *the most fun you can have with serious music*. [www.rocohouston.org](http://www.rocohouston.org)

#### **Contact**

James Rowland, 713-665-2700, [james@rocohouston.org](mailto:james@rocohouston.org)