

ABOUT THE MUSIC

For ROCO's debut album, it was important for the selection of works to be a collaborative process. We surveyed our musicians and asked them to select their favorite pieces from ROCO's repertoire over our first twelve seasons. Given our long history of commissioning, it was not surprising that five of our then fifty-eight world premiere commissions rose to the top. The recording sessions were originally scheduled for August 2017 in the Texas Hill Country, just outside of Houston. Unfortunately, Hurricane Harvey struck just days before, resulting in an eight month delay of the project. The sixth piece, *Anthem of Hope: Houston Strong*, commissioned in honor of the resiliency of the Houston community in the wake of the storm, was added to complete the story of the album.

ROCO.org

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Recorded April 2018
at St. John the Divine Episcopal Church
Houston, TX

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Shaping the future of classical music
by energizing, modernizing, and personalizing
the concert experience.

VISIONS TAKE FLIGHT

CD 1

- Karim Al-Zand** *Visions from Another World*
1. Ronde Fantastique 3:50
 2. Funeral Cortège of the Silkworm 6:03
 3. The Spinning Ballerina 4:22
- Reena Esmail**
4. Teen Murti for String Orchestra 9:54
- Derek Bernel** *Murmurations*
5. Gathering at Gretna Green 6:37
 6. Gliding Over Algiers 9:07
 7. Swarming Rome 5:36
- Total: 45:31**

CD 2

- Anthony DiLorenzo**
1. Jabberwocky 19:10
- Marcus Maroney** *Concerto for Chamber Orchestra*
2. Epigraph 5:23
 3. Variations 7:30
 4. Ostinato 5:08
- Anthony DiLorenzo**
5. Anthem of Hope: Houston Strong 4:32
- Total: 41:45**



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ROCO

VISIONS TAKE FLIGHT

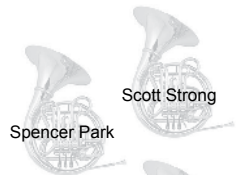


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Spencer Park

Scott Strong

Horn



Gavin Reed



Jim Thatcher
Principal



Makiko Hirata

Celeste



Laurie Meister

Harp



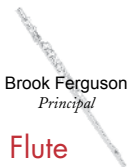
Maiko Sasaki

Clarinet

Nathan Williams
Principal



Rebecca
Powell Garfield



Brook Ferguson
Principal

Flute



Erik Gronfor

Bass



Sandor Ostlund
Principal



Courtenay
Vandiver Pereira

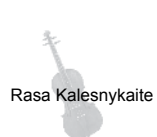
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Shino Hayashi



Richard Belcher
Principal



Rasa Kalesnykaite



Rachel Jordan



Kirsten Yon



Amy Thiaville



Maureen Nelson



Aloysia Friedmann



Scott St. John
Concertmaster

Violin I



Mei-Ann Chen
Conductor



Kristin Wolfe Jensen
Principal

Bassoon

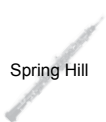


Daniel Chrisman



Alecia Lawyer
Principal

Oboe



Spring Hill



Suzanne LeFevre



Meredith Harris

Viola



Lorento Golofeev



Matt Dane
Principal



Matt McClung
Principal

Percussion



Christina Carroll



Karen Slotter



Craig Hauschildt



George Chase

Trumpet



Joseph Foley
Principal



Thomas Hultén
Principal

Trombone



Kana Kimura



Andrés González



Ken Hamao

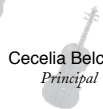


Tammy Linn



Mary Reed

Violin II



Cecelia Belcher
Principal

PROGRAM NOTES AND INFORMATION

compiled from interviews and writings of Andrea Moore

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Karim Al-Zand (b. 1970)

www.alzand.com

Visions from Another World (2008)

- I. Ronde Fantastique
- II. Funeral Cortège of the Silkworm
- III. The Spinning Ballerina

Visions is based upon engravings by J.J. Grandville (1803-47), one of the most popular and innovative French illustrators of the 19th Century who was often cited as a precursor to the Surrealist movement. Robert Simon wrote “the book of illustrations charts an excursion to a parallel universe populated by mutant animals, vegetal/human hybrids and inanimate objects come to life. The dreamscape they inhabit is equally fantastic.”

In his own words:

Ronde Fantastique is a lively, swirling dance in 7/8 time. Its syncopated tune is heard first in the winds, then in the strings and brass, the music then descending to the watery depths. A final climactic wave is followed by ripples ebbing away.

Funeral Cortège of the Silkworm is a slow march over an unchanging rhythm. Winds are featured in pairs as the insect procession goes by: the Death's Head Moths (off-stage oboes in fourths and fifths); fleas and ticks (flutes in tritones); ants (clarinets in thirds and sixths) and caterpillars (bassoons in sevenths and seconds). The funeral dirge wends its way through the orchestra and gradually fades off into the distance.

The Spinning Ballerina takes its cue from the whirling visual energy of Grandville's illustration; its frenetic music is in perpetual motion, always on the brink of careening out of control.



Reena Esmail (b. 1983)

www.reenaesmail.com

Teen Murti for String Orchestra (2013)

Early in her compositional years, Reena had the idea that good composition should be “seamless”. She got this notion partly from the show tunes she listened to as a child, with predictable direction and smooth transitions.

As she got further along in her studies with composers such as Chris Theofanidis, she felt an increasing sense of liberation from historical compositional rules. Reena, who has been a serious student of Hindustani music for several years, does not aim for fusion, though. Rather, she wants to let both musics exist in the same space, including not just musical content but other aspects of musical life, like concert culture and audience participation.

Most Indians will immediately recognize Teen Murti as the name of the New Delhi residence of the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, named for the sculpture that stands in front. Teen Murti means three statues, figures or representations in Hindi. Though not directly based on the sculptures, this work shares their title as it is centered around three large musical ‘figures’ that are adjoined by short interludes - similar to the idea behind Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. It lays out three tableaux: each rooted in a specific *raag* and its Hindustani melodic tradition, and those melodies are interwoven using a more Western technique.



Reena Esmail *continued...* In her own words:

At the many concerts of Hindustani musicians I attended while in India, I noticed a curious thing that would happen before each performance. The artist would announce the *raag* to be sung or played that evening, and immediately many of the cognoscenti in the audience would begin humming the characteristic phrases or ‘pakads’ of that *raag* quietly to themselves, intoning with the drone what was already sounding on stage. It had a magical feeling - as if that *raag* was present in the air, and tiny wisps of it were already starting to precipitate into the audible world in anticipation of the performance. I wanted to open this piece in that way and continue to return to that idea in the interludes.

.....

Derek Bermel (b. 1967)

www.derekbermel.com

Murmurations (2015)

- I. Gathering near Gretna Green
- II. Soaring over Algiers
- III. Swarming Rome

ROCO Co-commission with
New Century Chamber Orchestra,
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and A Far Cry



..... *continued*

Derek Bermel *continued...* In his own words:

When I listen to and watch a string orchestra play, I'm reminded of a murmuration, or flock of birds swirling in the sky. Visually and aurally, the performers seek unity on many levels - attention to tuning, tone, clarity of rhythm, consistency and pressure of bowing. They glide and dive in formation, soaring together or splitting into layers of counterpoint before regrouping into a single unit. During my year living in Rome, I was often treated to the graceful spectacle of a starling murmuration. Their stunning, geometrical displays of aviation prior to settling down for the night are a humbling sight to behold. In fact, starlings' mass motion suggest 'emergence,' a concept in game theory that explains how simple interactions can engender complex systems.

In *Murmurations*, I attempted to map onto a musical structure some of the behavior I observed in the starlings' flight. Their collective push and pull, swoop, and parallel movement manifests in the opening movement titled for the Scottish village where starlings frequently assemble. The music hovers and swoops, culminating in a cadenza - the lone concertmaster briefly separates from the flock for a rare individual moment, and is again swallowed up into the mass motion. In the middle movement, the melodic line glides alone, then in double, and finally triple layers of counterpoint over arpeggios in the lower strings. I was inspired to write the third movement upon learning that starlings signal and sense subtle directional intent to and from their neighbors seven birds distant. Here the notes travel in loose clusters, darting and fluttering far enough from each other to maneuver through the air, yet close enough to respond to sudden shifts in the murmuration's rhythm and cadence.

Anthony DiLorenzo (b.1967)

www.anthonydilorenzo.com

Jabberwocky (2014)

Funded in part by The Wortham Foundation

In his own words:

I really don't want the audience to have to take out a manual to listen to my music. As a kid, I lived in the cinema. I loved it! I was crazy about the music, always wanting to close my eyes and take a journey.

Storytelling pieces like ballets and tone poems have always been interesting to me - any kind of music that either tells or goes with a story. Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem, *Jabberwocky*, was the perfect place to start. I think this piece has a kind of French quality to it, a little bit like a French ballet — like *Daphnis and Chloe*, or *Petrouchka*.

I took some liberties with the poem, starting with Alice in the present day going into the Looking Glass: a fantasy within a fantasy. I gave musical space to some of the magical characters in the poem and made the boy in the poem a character in the piece. Wonderland isn't just an upside-down place full of chessboards and monarchs, there are presumably these other creatures like mome raths and slithy toves. I used a few percussion instruments and techniques to simulate the odd creatures of Wonderland, one of which is a cigar box with metal brushes used to create the sound of the wings of flying nymphs. The contrabassoon represents the Jub-jub bird in a huff and a clumsy gallop. The story concludes with the reading of the whimsical poem with the haunting and thought-provoking music underneath.



Marcus Maroney (b. 1976)

www.mkmaroney.com

Concerto for Chamber Orchestra (2016)

Funded in part by The Wortham Foundation

- I. Epigraph
- II. Variations
- III. Ostinato

In his own words:

A lot of my works are semi-programmatic. If there are no overt references to a story, there are still some external influences such as environment or poetry. This piece was written with Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* in mind; however, the only real reference is with the pairing of the instruments. For my own compositional style, I tend toward Jean Sibelius, using his sense of a necessary pulse, ostinatos (bass lines), and the metamorphosis of themes and repetitions.

These three movements sort of follow similar moods to those of Sibelius' *Fifth Symphony*: the second movement is a set of quasi-variations, and the third is based on a driving, soaring melody. I love the richness of his orchestration, and that may come through. I love the power Sibelius can get out of a smaller orchestra without having to pull out all of the bells and whistles. He tempers the unfamiliar and he works within the familiar, and I just find that remarkable.



Anthony DiLorenzo

Anthem of Hope: Houston Strong (2017)

Helping Houston heal from Hurricane Harvey, ROCO commissioned this piece as a response to the strength, caring, and courage the Houston community displayed, both during initial rescue efforts and throughout the recovery process. With the intention of creating a musical thread to tie the city together, ROCO provided the sheet music and recording of the work for use by the entire performing arts community. It has been performed by over twenty-five groups from Houston Grand Opera and dance companies, to wind quintets and high school bands.

"We wanted to find a way to reach across Houston's vibrant arts community and collectively embrace our wonderful city. Our hope is for this piece to illustrate how Houston is strengthened by our diversity and ability to build relationships to support one another." -- The ROCO team



Photo by MoreISO/iStock Getty Images



ROCO is a dynamic and innovative professional music ensemble, based in Houston, that flexes from 1 to 40 players from all over the US and Canada, with guest artists from around the world. Expanding the repertoire, ROCO has premiered over 65 commissions from living, American composers. Performing intimate concerts in dozens of venues, ROCO's musicians don't just give concerts – they challenge preconceptions, create extraordinary experiences, and foster new relationships with audiences through the language of music.

ROCO embraces technology with free, worldwide concert livestreams and real-time artist commentary via a smartphone app, as well as on-demand recordings of past concerts via the Listening Room. A vital part of the community, ROCO concert DVDs are sent to nursing homes and hospitals to bring music to those immobile communities, and their ROCOrooters music education/childcare program attracts multigenerational audiences.





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