This evening’s music will include the pieces above, not necessarily in this order, with a Take 5 (short intermission) and possible surprises.

February 8 | 5:00 pm
St. John the Divine

Christopher Rountree, Conductor
Andy Lin, Erhu • Kevin Lau, Composer

Alejandro Basulto* (Bah-SOOL-Toe)
Fanfarria de Feria
----2 minutes----

Kevin Lau* (LAUW)
Between the Earth and Forever - Concerto for Erhu and Orchestra
----15 minutes----

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (MOT-zahrt)
Maurerische Trauermusik (Masonic Funeral Music), in C minor, K. 477 (1785)
----5 minutes----

Jean-Féry Rebel (zhahn FEH-ree re-BEL)
Chaos and other movements from Les Élémens (The Elements) (1737)
----12 minutes----

Kate Salfelder*
Ephemera
----2 minutes----

William Grant Still
Darker America (1924)
----15 minutes----

Jess Langston Turner*
Fanfares and Riffs for Tiny Despots
----2 minutes----

*ROCO COMMISSIONED WORLD PREMIERE

* Please see page 6 for instructions on how to use LiveNote.

Audio program notes are available on our website and produced with thanks to Catherine Lu and Houston Public Media.
In keeping with our commitment to innovation, ROCO has partnered with InstantEncore to bring you the ROCO App! On the app, you can access, LiveNote which brings you unique, real-time commentary during the concert. The ROCO App also keeps you up-to-date on everything ROCO between concerts.

**Here’s how you can get in on the action:**

- Place your phone on “silent” or “do not disturb”.
- Go to the App Store or Google Play, search for “ROCO Houston”, and download the app to your phone.
- Open the ROCO app.
- LiveNote only runs during specific pieces (check your program). When it’s time, you’ll see a “LiveNote” icon along the bottom menu of the app. Tap this to launch LiveNote and access the musician commentary.
- On the next screen, tap on the highlighted box around the name of the first movement and LiveNote will automatically advance once the music starts.
- Two fun features: The dot at the bottom of the screen shows where we are in the piece, and if you see any highlighted terms, you can tap on them to view a definition.
- In a multi-movement piece, each movement will start automatically – just sit back and enjoy!

**Featured Artist**

Christopher Rountree, Guest Conductor

Conductor, composer, and curator Christopher Rountree has distinguished himself as one of classical music’s most forward-thinking innovators in programming, conducting, and community building. Whether presenting his beloved chamber group wild Up in a museum bathroom or leading the country’s most renowned ensembles through new music’s most exciting works at the world’s greatest concert halls, Rountree is the linchpin between orchestral music and the future of performance.

Rountree founded the renegade twenty-four-piece ensemble wild Up in 2010. The group’s eccentric mix of new music, pop, and performance art quickly jumped from raucous DIY bar shows to being lauded as the vanguard for classical music by critics for *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Performance Today*. The success of wild Up has led Rountree to collaborations with Björk, John Adams, David Lang, Scott Walker, and many of the planet’s greatest orchestras and ensembles.

In 2019 Rountree curated and conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s FLUXUS Festival, the experimental music component of the Phil’s 100th season in collaboration with the Getty Research Institute. Other recent highlights include debuts with the Cincinnati and Berkeley Symphonies; the New York premiere of Missy Mazzoli’s *Proving Up* at Miller Theater; his subscription debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; taking wild Up on tour with audience-interactive programs, celebrating local communities and the intersection of art and social justice; premieres of new pieces by Julianna Barwick and Andrew Greenwald; a program with Ted Hearne, George Lewis, Jen Hill, and Weston Olencki about religion, space, and the Internet; his debut at the Ecstatic Music Festival; playing a live radio show at the ACE Hotel with Nadia Sirota, Andrew Norman, and Caroline Shaw; curating a joint program with the LA Chamber Orchestra and Four Larks; and conducting a new program with Martha Graham Dance Company.

A seventh-generation California native, Rountree lives in Los Angeles.
Described as a “self-assured voice” (Barczablog) with a “masterful control over his idiom” (Classical Music Sentinel), Kevin Lau has established himself as one of Canada’s leading young composers. Awarded the 2017 Victor Martyn Lynn-Staunton Award by the Canada Council for Outstanding Achievement, Kevin’s music has been commissioned and performed by ensembles across North America, including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, Niagara Symphony Orchestra, the Hannaford Street Silver Band, Ensemble Made in Canada, and the Houston-based River Oaks Chamber Orchestra.

In 2016 he composed the score for the National Ballet of Canada’s original full-length ballet Le Petit Prince, featuring choreography by NBOC Principal Dancer and Choreographic Associate Guillaume Côté. His second ballet score, Dark Angels, was commissioned by the National Arts Centre Orchestra for its Encount3rs project in 2017, and was described as “riveting” (Ottawa Citizen) and “extraordinarily accomplished” (Artsfile). His most recent work, an opera (Bound) commissioned by Against the Grain Theatre, was hailed by the Globe and Mail as “a brilliant creation.”

Kevin’s discography includes the JUNO-nominated “Spin Cycle” (Centrediscs), featuring the Afiara String Quartet and DJ Skratch Bastid; “Encount3rs” (Analekta) featuring the NACO; “Solo Seven” (ATMA Classique) featuring violinist Marc Djokic; “The Sounds of Our Time” (Naxos) featuring cellist Rachel Mercer, and “Premieres” (Cambria Records) featuring violinist Conrad Chow.

Taiwanese-born violist and erhuist (Chinese violin), Andy Lin, is recognized as one of the most promising, and the only active, performer who specializes in both western and eastern instruments. Praised by The Strad, “The great Molto adagio…..elicited some of the night’s most sensitive work, especially from Wei-Yang Andy Lin on viola.” and New York Times, “Taiwanese-born violist Wei-Yang Andy Lin…..is also a virtuoso on the erhu, and he gave a brilliant performance.” Andy is the artistic director and co-founder of the New Asia Chamber Music Society. He holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from The Juilliard School and received his doctoral degree in Musical Arts from SUNY Stony Brook. He has won numerous competitions including Taiwan National Viola Competition and First Prize in the 2008 Juilliard Viola Concerto Competition. He has also appeared as a viola and/or erhu soloist with orchestras such as the Busan Metropolitan Traditional Music Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Children’s Orchestra Society, Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, Incheon Philharmonic, the Juilliard Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, New York Classical Players, Orford Academy Orchestra, Solisti Ensemble and Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra. Andy is also a member of the Musicians of Lenox Hill and serves as principal violist of the New York Classical Players and the Solisti Ensemble. He has been invited to perform chamber music with Itzhak Perlman, where The New York Times described, “Mr. Perlman, playing first violin… answered in kind by the violist Wei-Yang Andy Lin.” He has also been invited by the Metropolitan Museum to give recitals at their Gallery Concert Series and Patrons Lounge Concert, as well as a recital at the Caramoor Center for the Music and the Arts.
I. Alejandro Basulto: 
Fanfarria de Feria

In His Own Words: “As a Mexican musician, the word *fanfare* has two different meanings: on the one hand, it refers to a piece of celebratory music usually performed by the brass and percussion—which is the usual interpretation. On the other hand, it is a particular tune ingrained in Mexico’s popular culture, simply known as the ‘fanfarria’ (Spanish for ‘Fanfare’) or the ‘diana.’ While both are performed by the same instrumental forces (brass and percussion) and serve the same purposes (celebratory), the traditional and the Mexican fanfare have a very different character. The usual fanfare has this unmistakably highbrow and solemn flair—even fast-paced fanfares share this grandiloquent sound. On the other hand, the ‘Mexican Fanfarria’ is unequivocally popular, lowbrow, and uncomplicated. I find it fascinating that while the ‘Mexican Fanfarria’ is technically speaking a ‘fanfare,’ its character sets the piece apart in a very different realm. In my ‘Fanfarria de Feria’ (which roughly translates into ‘Fair Fanfare’), I decided to paraphrase the ‘Diana’ tune and create narrative tension between the highbrow and the lowbrow aspects of what I understand as a fanfare.”

Whistle While You Work: The percussionist for this piece plays the usual battery of instruments but includes two more fun ones: a police whistle and a slide whistle. What a job!

Further Listening: Head to ROCO Replay to hear more of Alejandro’s music, including *Tríptico de Luz* from earlier this season. Also, *Jig Variations* for guitar and chamber orchestra (Toccata Next TOCN0001)

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Kevin Lau, Composer

Kevin Lau, a composer, writes about his work and experiences in the music industry. He is active as a film composer, arranger, and pianist, and has written scores for over a dozen films, including Invisible Essence: The Little Prince. He has also created arrangements for artists like Sarah Slean, Suzie McNeil, and groups such as the Art of Time Ensemble. He performs many of his own works and collaborates with artists like Scott St. John, Lynn Kuo, and Victor Cheng.

Born in Hong Kong, Kevin moved to Toronto at the age of 7. In 2012, he received his doctorate in music composition from the University of Toronto, under the supervision of Christos Hatzis. He has also guest-lectured at UoT for the past four years. Kevin has served as a Composer in Residence for various orchestras and ensembles, and has guest-lectured at the University of Toronto for the past four years. He has also served as the RBC Affiliate Composer for the Niagara Symphony Orchestra from 2018-19.

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FIFteen Project: Curated by MARK BULLER

In celebration of Season 15, Mark Buller has curated an incredible list of diverse composers to write fifteen Fanfares, Interludes, and Finales commissioned and sprinkled throughout the season.

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In addition to composing concert music, Kevin is also active as a film composer, arranger, and pianist. He has written the scores to over a dozen films, including Invisible Essence: The Little Prince, and has created arrangements for artists such as Sarah Slean, Suzie McNeil, Christos Hatzis, and groups such as the Art of Time Ensemble. He has performed many of his own works and collaborates frequently with artists such as Scott St. John (violin), Lynn Kuo (violin), and Victor Cheng (piano).
**Quick intro:** Written for ROCO; this is the first performance.

**About the Piece:** Lau was inspired by a trip to NASA’s Johnson Space Center, which awoke a fascination with exploration itself as well as an “admiration for the intrepid explorers who continue to venture beyond the boundaries of our planet, wading into the mystery of the cosmos on behalf of all humankind.” But why choose the erhu as a solo instrument in a concerto inspired by space exploration? The composer cites one special “invisible thread which kept [him] tethered” during the creative process: his grandfather, who himself played the erhu. This idea of a tethering thread, a temporary lifeline, is mirrored in a photograph whose caption lent this piece its name, a stunning picture of a Canadian astronaut venturing out of his ship on his first spacewalk – treading that gossamer, infinite space “between the earth and forever.”

**Name That Instrument!** The erhu is a traditional Chinese instrument dating back at least to the Tang Dynasty in the late first millennium. It is bowed like the violin, but has only two strings and is played on the lap instead of the shoulder. Like a drum, the front of the resonating body is covered with animal skin (for the erhu, traditionally from a python), though in recent years nonorganic options have arisen.

**About Lau:** Born in Hong Kong, Kevin moved to Toronto when he was 7. He was for three years the RBC Affiliate Composer at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and has written a number of works for ballet and film. ROCO audiences may remember his chamber work The Nightingale from April 2018.

**Extra Percussion:** The percussion section is fairly large for this piece. A few instruments you may not recognize: crotales (a series of metal discs played with traditional mallets as well as a double bass bow); anvil (metal designed to sound like an actual anvil!), and waterphone (a handheld idiophone with a series of metal rods).

**Further Listening:** *The Nightingale*, available via ROCO Replay. Also, on YouTube, find a recording of an erhu playing Franz Waxman’s demanding Carmen Fantasy, written for the violin but performed on this soulful instrument.

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**Canadian Space Agency astronaut Chris Hadfield making one of the first spacewalks by a Canadian during the STS-100 mission in 2001.**

NASA astronaut Scott Parazynski is reflected in Hadfield’s visor.

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NASA photo STS100-395-032 (19 April-1 May 2001), taken by Scott E. Parazynski, in public domain.
III. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Masonic Funeral Music

Quick intro: Written in 1785 and performed in November at a Masonic funeral for a Viennese duke and count.

A Rare Quotation: Mozart isn’t typically known to use musical quotations, but on the title page to his manuscript he made a point of copying out the traditional plainchant melody (‘Lamentatio’) which is sung during Holy Week. This theme is threaded throughout the piece.

Mozart the Freemason: Mozart was admitted to the Viennese Lodge in late 1784 and was quickly promoted to the rank of ‘Master Mason’ within a few months. This was a brilliant career move, as significant aristocrats were also members, and rubbing shoulders was good for business. Furthermore, Mozart enjoyed the company of the more rational faction of Masons whose ideals were shaped by the Enlightenment – a faction which would incidentally come to be known as the Illuminati. (Cue all the conspiracy theories!) Interestingly, despite being one of the first ‘freelance’ composers without a court-sponsored position (a decision purposefully made, as he found sponsorship stultifying), Mozart still knew to rely on the monied class. When he began Masonic Funeral Music he had been a mason for less than one year. He would go on to write a small handful of works for performances at gatherings of Masons.

Further Listening: Mozart’s opera The Magic Flute famously includes Masonic references; just for the fun of it, his cantata Die Mauerfreude (The Mason’s Joy).

IV. Jean-Féry Rebel: Les élémens

Quick intro: A 1737 “dance symphony” using facets of Greek mythology to describe the creation of the world. First performed in Paris without the initial movement in 1737, with dancers; performed in full the following year.

In the beginning: The first movement shocks even modern audiences with its brash dissonance. Rebel includes a cluster (a clump of notes – think of playing a piano with your palm or forearm), then each of the “element” themes one right after another. The movement is more accurately descriptive of the early prehistorical process than Rebel might have realized: right after we hear a “Big Bang,” the elements fly by, and only then do we begin to feel the comforting pull of musical gravity, tonality. The second movement depicts earth and water; the third, fire. Next, in the fourth movement, we hear evocations of bird song, with the implication of earth itself as a stabilizing force. The following movements are traditional dances – almost as if we now see the introduction of humanity, with all its fancy dance moves.

About the Composer: Jean-Féry Rebel was the son of a singer in the private chapel of Louis XIV. After study with Jean-Baptiste Lully, an official court composer at Versailles, Rebel quickly moved up the ranks to that same position. As a composer, he kept abreast of international developments, and introduced a number of Italian fashions, including a reliance on string sonatas and a new tendency to call multi-movement pieces “symphonies.”

What a Job: One of Rebel’s early musical jobs was to lead a consort of players as “Batteur de mesure.” This involved not conducting, but beating time on the floor with a heavy stick. Incidentally, this very profession led to the death of Rebel’s teacher Lully, who accidentally hit his own foot with the staff; the resulting gangrene spread and he died. One imagines that Rebel would have been pretty careful after that.

Further Listening: For another baroque piece with surprising dissonance, check out Biber’s Battalia, which features a musical approximation of a chorus of drunken soldiers.
V. Kathryn Salfelder:  
*Ephemera*

**Meet Kathryn:** In her own words, Salfelder “engages late-Medieval and Renaissance polyphony in conversations with 21st-century techniques; she borrows both literally from chansons, motets, and masses, as well as more liberally from Renaissance-era forms and structures.” She currently teaches at the New England Conservatory in Boston, and previously taught at MIT.

**She Writes:** “The noun ‘ephemera’ commonly refers to items such as tokens, tickets, or pamphlets, only designed to be useful for a short time. It also has a secondary, more intriguing, definition: guests, visitors, or persons staying at an inn. The music embraces this latter definition. A cloud of string harmonics hovers in the background. Listen for the musical “guests” – triumphant piano chords – who arrive immediately at the onset, but depart after a brief stay. We are left with sweet, yet faint, memories of their short-lived visit.”

**Further Listening:** Check out Kate’s beautiful *Lux Perpetua*, a concerto for soprano saxophone and orchestra commissioned by the Albany Symphony Orchestra.

VI. William Grant Still:  
*Darker America*

**Quick intro:** Written in 1924 and premiered in New York two years later.

**The Piece:** Still evokes the struggle of African-Americans by juxtaposing three themes: an introductory “theme of the American Negro,” a “sorrow” theme, and finally a “hope” theme which looks forward to equality and acceptance. In addition to the musical language, which incorporates the dialects of jazz and spirituals, Still uses a call-and-response technique familiar to the musical descendants of African music.

**Meet the Composer:** William Grant Still was born in deeply-segregated Arkansas and, after attending college in Ohio, found work in New York, where he arranged for W.C. Handy while still finding time to study with such composers as George Whitefield Chadwick and Edgar Varèse. *Darker America* was his first success, and led to a successful career as both composer and conductor. His catalogue of works includes five symphonies and eight operas. His was a career of firsts: he was the first African-American conductor to conduct a major American orchestra, the first to have an opera produced by a leading company (NY City Opera), and the first to see his opera televised nationally.

**‘Hot’ Music in the Concert Hall:** *Darker America* was written the same year as Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* and just one year after Milhaud’s *La creation du monde*, both of which draw heavily on the jazz styles prevalent in Harlem at the time. The music scene in Harlem was on fire, and composers in both the New World and the Old immediately saw the vast possibilities in this new music. Looking back, it seems inevitable that jazz would enter the classical canon, and it makes us wonder how the music of today might successfully emerge in pieces being written right now.

**Further Listening:** Still is perhaps best-known for his terrific *Afro-American Symphony*, which incorporates American folk styles. Try listening to some of Duke Ellington’s larger-scale works from a ‘classical’ perspective and you’ll see how Still straddled that imaginary classical/jazz divide, just from the other side.
VII. Jess Langston Turner: 

*Fanfare and Riffs for Tiny Despots*

**Meet Jess:** Born in South Carolina, Turner is quickly becoming well-known in the world of wind band, and he writes for musicians at all levels. His music is rhythmically propulsive and gesturally dramatic.

**Fifteen-Second Summary:** “The ‘Tiny Despots’ I originally had in mind while writing this piece were birds. Outside my window, there is a bird feeder and most days there are several different types of (usually male) birds jockeying and posturing fiercely in order to protect ‘their’ food from every other bird in the area. However, when each of these ‘tiny despots’ are done eating, they fly off, and their miniature empires are left to the next little tyrant. This fanfare is dedicated to these, as well as the human tyrants that come and go just as quickly (and shrilly) as the tiny despots outside my window.”

**Further Listening:** Jess’s “Dancefares” is one of the most fun, engaging band pieces I’ve ever heard. It’s a piece about “earworms, little musical fragments that get stuck in our heads and won’t dislodge.”
Make a resonating impact towards shaping the future of classical music with us by joining ROCO Resound! This new consortium, dedicated to supporting ROCO’s commissions, brings together like-minded individuals to invest in the creation of new music.

re•sound:
verb, 1. fill a place with sound; be loud enough to echo

Every new piece of music starts quietly with an idea, which grows louder when it is premiered, and eventually reverberates through audiences and the world as it is performed again and again. ROCO has commissioned and performed the world premiere of nearly 80 new works over our history, making us the 3rd highest commissioner of new music in the United States. By the end of our 2019-2020, 15th Anniversary Season, we will have performed 100 world premiere commissions.

re•sound:
verb, 2. sing the praises of

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“One of the country’s most innovative classical musical ensembles”— Houstonia Magazine
Joyful and heartfelt thanks go to Steven A. Newberry and John Meier, Director and Associate Director of Music and Worship at St. John the Divine and organists for the church. Steve is a fellow SMU alum for his Masters and John received his MM from Rice. John joined St. John the Divine in 2002 and Steve is coming up on his 20th anniversary here!

I personally am so grateful for the enthusiastic support and encouragement Steve and John have given me, and now all of the team, from the very beginning of founding ROCO to this 15th season and beyond. When I heard the church was renovating and I was ‘told’ from above to start ROCO, Steve was instrumental (see what I did there?) in ushering in the new Letourneau organ and oversaw the development of the enhanced acoustics that would ultimately give ROCO this glorious space to begin and flourish.

Thank you both for your incredible guidance of the people at St. John’s and for continually reminding us all that music is the purest and most expressive way to worship and connect. -- Alecia
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ROCO is a dynamic and innovative professional music ensemble that flexes from 1 to 40 players from all over the US and Canada, with guest artists from around the world. 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.

Widely recognized for diversity in programming, a recent study from the Institute for Composer Diversity found ROCO is the number one ensemble in the US for performing the works of women and number two for the works of composers of color. Additionally, ROCO has the third-highest number of commissions in the United States and has premiered nearly 100 commissions from living composers. 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 popular music streaming services. 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 music education/childcare program attracts multigenerational audiences.

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