



ROCO ANNOUNCES ITS 2018-19 SEASON: “GAMES PEOPLE PLAY”

The 14th season from the innovative Houston-based professional music ensemble features seven world premiere commissions, and a commitment to diversity that sees them presenting a female composer, conductor, or soloist on every concert

New pieces include a musical chess match between piano and orchestra, a tribute to Turkish wrestler Koca Yusuf, a chamber work where audiences vote on their phones to influence the direction of the performance, and many more

ROCO continues to change the way audiences think about and experience classical music concerts, with a vintage game night at Rienzi, Peter and the Wolf at the Houston Zoo, and a game of musical chairs through the historic homes at The Heritage Society

ROCO will also release its first commercial recording featuring six world premiere commissions in the Fall of 2018

ROCO is excited to announce its 2018–19 season, entitled “Games People Play.” The rollicking musical rumpus will include seven world premiere commissions – bringing the

organization's total to an impressive 76 – and will reinforce ROCO's commitment to diversity by featuring a female composer, conductor, or soloist on every concert.

The ***In Concert*** performances feature pieces running the game-related gamut from a chess match between piano and orchestra, to a sonic simulacrum of solitaire, to an orchestral depiction of a Turkish wrestler. The delightfully unorthodox, musician-led ***Unchambered*** series continues to offer a new vision of how chamber music can uniquely connect performers and audiences – including a new piece entitled *Mind Games*, where the audience votes with their phones during the performance and influences the direction of the piece. The ***Connections*** series continues to take the music out of the concert hall and into new and unusual places, including a vintage game night at Rienzi, a larger-than-life version of musical chairs at The Heritage Society, and a performance of *Peter and the Wolf* at the Houston Zoo that swaps 'wolf' for 'bear' in celebration of the zoo's new ursine exhibit.

Alecia Lawyer, ROCO's founder, artistic director, and principal oboist, says, "Often described as fun, dynamic, and a joy to experience, ROCO musicians will go further this season and explore games through music. Games are a great way for friends and family to share time together and deepen their relationships as we hope to do with you, our audience."

Additionally, ROCO will release their first commercial album in the fall of 2018, featuring six world premiere commissions including recordings of Karim Al-Zand's *Visions from Another World*, Derek Bermel's *Murmurations*, Anthony DiLorenzo's *Anthem of Hope: Houston Strong* and *Jabberwocky*, Reena Esmail's *Teen Murti*, and Marcus Maroney's *Concerto for Chamber Orchestra*.

ROCO 2018-19 SEASON

IN CONCERT SERIES



ROCO's *In Concert* series, which features the full 40-piece orchestra and live-streamed performances, kicks off September 21 & 22 with the world premiere of Maxime Goulet's *Checkmate*, a chess game for piano and orchestra based on the legendary 1996 match where IBM's "Deep Blue" computer defeated reigning world champion Garry Kasparov. The piano part (played by the singular Lara Downes) represents Kasparov while the orchestra plays the

part of Deep Blue, with the actual match projected above the stage in real-time. ROCO principals, Kristin Wolfe Jensen, bassoon, and Nathan Williams, clarinet, are the featured soloists on Strauss' *Duo Concertino for Bassoon and Clarinet*. Conductor Paul Watkins, cellist with the Emerson String Quartet, will lead the program (which also includes a piece from his brother, British composer Huw Watkins).

The all-female-composer program "Queen of Hearts" continues the series on November 17, with ROCO favorite Mei-Ann Chen at the podium. *Solitaire*, a world premiere commission by Heather Schmidt for violin solo, features ROCO concertmaster Scott St. John, and Anna Clyne's *Within Her Arms*, Ruth Gipps's *Seascape*, and Louise Farrenc's *Symphony No. 3* round out this program.



Travel around Europe by rail on February 23 with "Ticket to Ride," beginning with Jim Stephenson's musical tribute to miniature trains, *ROCOmotive*. Conductor (see what we did there!) Brett Mitchell steers the proceedings in his ROCO debut, taking audiences on a tour to England and Germany with Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*, Poland with Wojciech Kilar's *Orawa*, France with the Saint-Saëns *Cello Concerto No. 1*, featuring Richard Belcher, ROCO principal cello, as soloist, and finally to Austria with Mozart's *Symphony No. 35*,

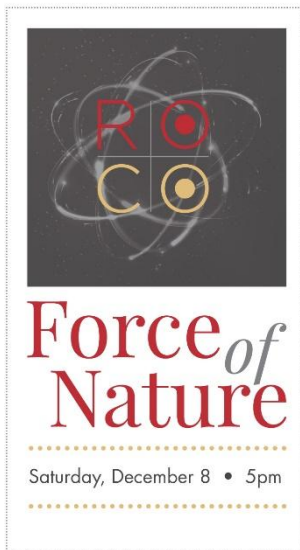
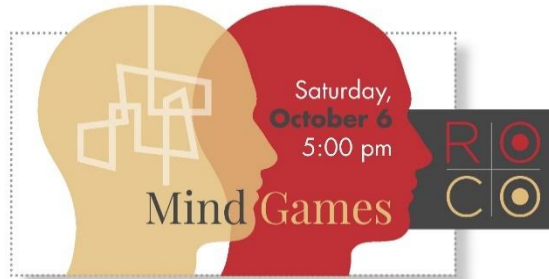
"Haffner".

The final concert of the series on May 4, "The Wrestler," features the world premiere of Erberk Eryilmaz's *Koca Yusuf*, *Wrestling Airs for Chamber Orchestra*, written in memory of Koca Yusuf, an internationally famous, 19th century Turkish wrestler who instigated a riot when he threw an opponent out of a ring during a match at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1898. Conductor David Danzmayr brings one of his favorite pieces, Jocelyn Morlock's *Solace*, into the mix, while organ soloist Paul Jacobs returns for Samuel Barber's *Toccata Festiva*.



UNCHAMBERED SERIES

The *Unchambered* series, which features ROCO soloists or small ensembles in an intimate setting at MATCH, opens October 6 with “Mind Games”. ROCO trumpeter Joe Foley and percussionist Matt McClung react to each other to create the shape of the piece in the moment, and the audience can also vote on their phones to influence the direction of the piece.



“Force of Nature” on December 8 is a concert of nature-themed music for flute, oboe, viola, harp and piano, including George Crumb’s *Vox Balaenae (Voice of the Whale)* for electric flute, cello and amplified piano, and Madeline Dring’s *Trio for Flute, Oboe & Piano*.



“Terzetto” on February 9 will offer an innovative collaboration between dance and strings, led by Suzanne LeFevre, viola.



The series closes on April 6 with the ROCO Brass Quintet performing *Chase Sequence*, James Stephenson’s work where the players imitate one another musically, each one trying to “catch up” with the other.

CONNECTIONS SERIES

ROCO’s progressive *Connections* series, featuring site-specific, collaborative, and multi-



disciplinary performances, starts on November 29 with “Vintage Game Night” at Rienzi, part of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Audiences will have a chance to play classic games amidst the magnificent surroundings, before watching violinist Scott St. John engage in a musical battle with cellist Richard Belcher.



The annual “Beer & Brass” evening returns to the Saint Arnold Brewing Company on January 10, and the Houston Zoo will once again play host to “Peter and the Wolf” on January 27, though the title will change to “Peter and the Bear” to highlight the Zoo's new bear exhibit and conservation

efforts. The series closes on March 7 with a larger-than-life game of “Musical Chairs” at Houston’s Heritage Society, where audiences travel from house to historical house, with a different ROCO musician performing in each.



ABOUT ROCO

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.

Expanding the repertoire, ROCO has premiered over 65 commissions from living American 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 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 music education/childcare program attracts multigenerational audiences.