



ROCO Announces Its 2020–21 Season:  
“Color and Light”



ROCO’s 16th season features illuminating musical collaborations exploring global soundscapes, presenting ten commissions, in three series of concerts showcasing the ensemble’s flexible model.

New works include a nature-inspired triptych by Alyssa Morris, a concerto for bandoneon (a Latin-American bellowed instrument) by soloist Richard Scofano, a vocal work by Reena Esmail based on Chickasaw poetry, a piece by Anna Clyne honoring Beethoven’s 250th birthday, and a deeply personal chamber work by Milad Yousufi, telling the story of his

journey to America.

ROCO continues to revitalize how audiences experience classical music with performances in partnership with unique organizations across the Houston community, and concerts livestreamed to the world.

***For immediate release – Houston, TX*** – ROCO is thrilled to announce its 2020-2021 season, entitled “Color and Light.” Taking audiences on an illuminating, global journey celebrating nature and culture, the fully livestreamed season will include ten new works commissioned by ROCO, including eight co-commissions in partnership with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Orlando Philharmonic, The Knights, and more. Alyssa Morris serves as composer-in-residence for the season, writing a triptych of pieces showcasing the ensemble’s flexible model - including a work for wind sextet, solo instrument, and a piece for chamber orchestra inspired by the colorful children’s book “Musicians of the Sun”, based upon an Aztec tale.

This year’s ***In Concert*** performances for the full 40-piece ensemble feature new premieres which include a concerto for bandoneon composed and performed by Richard Scofano, a piece for strings by Anna Clyne co-commissioned with the Australian, Scottish, and Lausanne Chamber Orchestras in honor of Beethoven’s 250th birthday, the premiere of Alyssa Morris’ chamber orchestra work - highlighting ROCO’s principal winds, and a new co-commission by Reena Esmail based on the poem “The History of Red,” which will feature soprano Kathryn Mueller.

ROCO’s ***Connections*** series that explores the unique spaces of Houston

will once again provide new ways to experience classical music outside of the concert hall. ROCO will perform a Musical Ofrenda at MECA@TBH (Talento Bilingue De Houston) Houston, and return to Holocaust Museum Houston to tell the story of composer Milad Yousufi's cultural journey as a refugee from Afghanistan through a new five-movement chamber suite with narrator. The ***Unchambered*** series, where ROCO musicians curate their own concerts, will move to new locations at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art.

“Even though Season 16's theme of *Color and Light* is very timely, it has been our intent before this unprecedented time of social distancing,” says ROCO's Founder and Artistic Director Alecia Lawyer. “While our musicians can continue to connect us all digitally, we greatly look forward to being in person with you to share the power of our language of music and be in relationship with you once again.”

Additionally, on the heels of ROCO's debut album *Visions Take Flight*, recognized with a Grammy Award for Producer of the Year, the ensemble will be recording a new CD which compiles the best of their chamber music premieres to show the breadth, virtuosity, and personality of individual ROCO musicians and composers.

### **Full 2020-21 season information is below**

For more information go to [www.ROCO.org](http://www.ROCO.org).

 [Official Website](#)

 [Performances](#)

---

# ROCO 2020-2021 Season

## ***IN CONCERT* Series**



ROCO's ***In Concert*** series, which showcases the full 40-piece orchestra and also includes concert livestreams, lifts off on **September 26** with "Starburst." Conducted by ROCO's Artistic Partner, Mei-Ann Chen, the opening concert is centered around the world premiere of Richard Scofano's concerto for bandoneon (a Latin-American bellowed instrument) entitled *La tierra sin mal* (*The land without evil*), and will also include the works of Jessie Montgomery's *Starburst*; Fauré's *Masques et bergamasques*; Debussy's *Clair de Lune*; and Kodály's *Dances of Marosszék*.



The *In Concert* series will continue with "Oceans" on **November 14**, a nature-inspired program featuring the orchestra – conductorless!

Celebrating Beethoven's 250th birthday, the concert will feature a new work by Anna Clyne for strings, *Stride*. Rounding out the program are two classics – Beethoven's *String Quartet Op. 18, no. 4*, and Debussy's paean to the sea, *La Mer* – as well as Coleridge-Taylor's Nonet and Bolcom's *Ghost Rags*.

# SHADOWS

ROCO IN CONCERT · FEBRUARY 27

ROCO explores the interactions between light and dark on **February 27** with “Shadows.” Conducted by Ward Stare in his ROCO debut, the concert is built around a commission by Alyssa Morris, *Tlapalli Tlahuilli* - based on the children's book *Musicians of the Sun* and featuring ROCO's principal winds as soloists. The program also includes Patrick Harlin's *Shadow Dancer*, Lennox Berkeley's *Divertimento*, Haydn's Symphony No. 101 “The Clock,” and Luigi Dallapiccola's *Tartiniana Seconda*, a Baroque-inspired work that features concertmaster Scott St. John.



# FLAMENCO

ROCO IN CONCERT · APRIL 24

On **April 24**, the *In Concert* series comes to a close with “Flamenco,” featuring the world premiere of *The History of Red*, a co-commission by

Reena Esmail based on a text by Chickasaw poet Linda Hogan, with soprano Kathryn Mueller as soloist. Brett Mitchell returns to ROCO to conduct the premiere of Quinn Mason's *Princesa de la Luna* for harp and strings, John Adams' *Christian Zeal and Activity*, Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Errolllyn Wallen's *Photography*, and Carlos Surinach's flamenco for orchestra *Ritmo Jondo*.

---

## ***UNCHAMBERED Series***

The *Unchambered* series continues to highlight the distinct musical colors that ROCO musicians offer, through self-curated programs in exciting new locations at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and Nancy Littlejohn Fine Art. The series starts on **October 14** with oboist Spring Hill, flutist Rebecca Powell Garfield, and harpist Laurie Meister.

On **February 13**, ROCO winds and pianist Andreea Mut perform a program including the world premiere of a wind sextet by Alyssa Morris. The ROCO Brass Quintet will conclude the Unchambered series on **March 6** with a performance of contemporary and classic favorites.

---

## ***CONNECTIONS Series***

ROCO's *Connections* series continues to take classical music outside of the concert hall through creative collaborations that explore unique spaces around Houston. On **November 1** ROCO will welcome the return of their Musical Ofrenda at MECA@TBH in celebration of Dia de los Muertos, presenting the world premiere of a commission by Kerwin Young - *Coming Forth by Day*, a collection of trios for baritone, oboe, viola, and cello.

The *Connections* series returns to Rienzi on **February 4**, for a chamber music celebration of the music of Margaret Bonds, one of the most prolific African-American, female composers, curated by and featuring pianist Howard Watkins, with bass-baritone Timothy Jones. ROCO wraps up the series on **March 11** to once again partner with Holocaust Museum Houston for a chamber concert featuring a deeply personal commission by Afghan composer Milad Yousufi, entitled *My Journey to America*.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING

**September 26, 2020**

Starburst | In Concert

**October 14, 2020**

Love Notes | Unchambered

**November 1, 2020**

Musical & Literary Ofrenda @ MECA | Connections

**November 14, 2020**

Oceans | In Concert

**February 4, 2021**

Celebration of Margaret Bonds @ Rienzi | Connections

**February 13, 2021**

Kaleidoscope | Unchambered

**February 27, 2021**  
Shadows | In Concert

**March 6, 2021**  
Blackbird | Unchambered

**March 11, 2021**  
Holocaust Museum Houston | Connections

**April 24, 2021**  
Flamenco | In Concert

---

## 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. ROCO's debut album, *Visions Take Flight*, was recognized for a GRAMMY® Award for Producer of the Year for Blanton Alspaugh.

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 called ROCOrooters attracts multigenerational audiences.

---

## Contact

Andrew Ousley  
[andrew@unison.media](mailto:andrew@unison.media)

917.331.2337