

ROCO announces its 2021-22 Season: “Musical Threads”



Weaving tales of hope, the 17th season from the Houston-based professional ensemble highlights timely and impactful topics through dynamic collaborations and eight new commissions

New works include a triptych of pieces by ROCO’s composer-in-residence Derek Bermel, a symphony by Maxime Goulet, and commissions by Mark Adamo, Aaron Jay Kernis, Marcus Maroney, Toulmin Prize winner Leanna Primiani, and more

For the first time in ROCO’s 17-year history, each of the ensemble’s In Concert performances will feature a female conductor, including Artistic Partner Mei-Ann Chen

ROCO will continue to create musical experiences in a variety of unique venues across Houston, returning to Asia Society Texas Center, Holocaust Museum Houston, Czech Center Museum Houston, and more

For immediate release – Houston, TX – ROCO is excited to announce its 2021-22 season, “Musical Threads.” Reinforcing music as a throughline that connects us all, the ensemble’s 17th season weaves tales of hope, highlighting timely and impactful topics through eight new commissions in partnership with orchestras across the world, focusing on common threads of environmental awareness, human rights, and the scarcity of time.

Supported by an award from National Endowment for the Arts, the ensemble welcomes Derek Bermel as the season’s composer-in-residence, writing a triptych of pieces showcasing ROCO’s flexibility, including a work for large chamber orchestra and a collection of songs based on the writings of Chicana author Sandra Cisneros.

The Albert and Margaret Alkek Foundation In Concert Series, featuring the full ensemble of 40 musicians, presents a number of new premieres, including *Ice Storm Symphony* by Maxime Goulet which is based on the historic Canadian ice storm of 1998, and co-commissioned by ROCO with Orchestre Classique de Montreal, Laval Symphony Orchestra, Sherbrooke Symphony Orchestra, and Trois-Rivières Symphony Orchestra; Mark Adamo’s cello concerto *Last Year*, a piece co-commissioned by ROCO with the American Composers Orchestra, New Century Chamber Orchestra, and Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, and inspired by natural disasters

and climate change; and *Earth*, a collaboration between composer Aaron Jay Kernis and poet and agricultural researcher Kai Hoffman-Krull which features tenor Nicholas Phan, and reflects on the fundamental environmental crisis of our time. Throughout this season, ROCO will also perform remaining commissions of the FIFteen Project, which were initially scheduled to be performed during their 15th season, “Coming of Age.”

The ensemble’s ***Unchambered Series***—curated by and featuring ROCO musicians in intimate chamber performances—returns to MATCH (Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston), and highlights strings, brass, and percussion in programs from concertmaster Scott St. John with violinist Pasha Sabouri, trumpeters Joe Foley and George Chase, and the ROCO Percussion Trio.

ROCO’s exploration of unique spaces across Houston continues with the ***Connections Series***. This season will welcome the return of beloved events including Beer & Brass at Saint Arnold Brewing Company, Yuletide Brunch & Brass at the Czech Center Museum Houston, a chamber performance at Holocaust Museum Houston, and a Texan-Schubertiade performance at Rienzi. ROCO will also perform the world premiere of Huang Ruo’s Passacaglia for Strings entitled *A Dust in Time* at Asia Society Texas Center.

“Music is the invisible but palpable connection we weave through our world,” says ROCO Founder and Artistic Director Alecia Lawyer. “Join our fabulous musicians on our Musical Threads journey this season, through the unique spaces of Houston!”

This past season, ROCO readily adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While continuing to livestream their concerts for free—an effort to increase the accessibility of their concerts that the ensemble has been committed to for multiple seasons—ROCO introduced their AmBRASSadors to the Houston community, performing innovative, socially-distanced concerts in neighborhoods across the city.

In September 2020 ROCO launched “ROCO on the Go”, further weaving music throughout the community, with the innovative “ROCO on Buffalo Bayou” in collaboration with Buffalo Bayou Partnership, a fellow Houston-based non-profit organization that has revitalized and transformed the Buffalo Bayou trail system. This project introduced 40 stops at landmarks and public art exhibits throughout the trails, each with its own QR code linking to works from ROCO’s 15-year catalog of concerts available for free listening, specially curated by the ROCO team. Now expanding to multiple locations across greater Houston, including Texas Children’s Hospital, Harris County’s Precinct 2 Park System, and more, “ROCO on the Go” will continue to grow throughout ROCO’s 2021-22 season.

Full 2021-22 season information is below

For more information go to www.ROCO.org.

 [Official Website](http://www.ROCO.org)

 [Performances](#)

ROCO 2021-2022 Season

The Albert and Margaret Alkek Foundation IN CONCERT Series

ROCO's *In Concert Series*, which showcases the full 40-piece orchestra, will begin on **September 25** with "Bursting at the Seams." Conducted by ROCO's Artistic Partner Mei-Ann Chen, the opening concert is centered around the world premiere of the first movement of Maxime Goulet's *Ice Storm Symphony, Turmoil*, telling the story of Canada's historic, devastating 1998 ice storm. The symphony was co-commissioned by ROCO with the Orchestre Classique de Montreal, Laval Symphony Orchestra, Sherbrooke Symphony Orchestra, and Trois-Rivières Symphony Orchestra. The concert will also include Michael Abels' *Delights & Dances*, Domenico Cimarosa's "Il Maestro di Cappella" Overture, and the world premiere of Marcus Maroney's *OK, Goodbye*. for flute, viola d'amore, and chamber orchestra, featuring soloists Matt Dane and Christina Jennings—and inspired by the melting of the Icelandic Okjökull glacier.

On **November 13**, ROCO will continue their In Concert series with "A Stitch in Time," featuring conductor Jeri Lynne Johnson's ROCO debut, and the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *Last Year*—a work co-commissioned by ROCO with the American Composers Orchestra, New Century Chamber Orchestra, and Manitoba Chamber Orchestra—in which each movement represents one of the four seasons. The program also includes Hilary Purrington's FIFteen commission, *Threshold*, Jonathan Peters' *Arthropod Suite*,

accompanied by images from the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 8 in F Major*—whose 2nd movement parodies the metronome.

ROCO's third In Concert performance, "Canvassing the Earth," will take place on **February 26** with two world premieres led by conductor Sarah Hicks, also making her ROCO debut. *Earth*, composed by Aaron Jay Kernis, reflects upon the fundamental environmental crisis of our time, and was created in collaboration with poet and agricultural researcher Kai Hoffman-Krull. Featuring tenor Nicholas Phan, the work tells the story of a farmer's life through vignettes, exploring the incremental changes of the seasons and how those who depend upon the land must adapt. Leanna Primiani's *Neither man nor money validate my worth*, co-commissioned by the League of American Orchestras with the generous support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, honors survivors of human trafficking and will be accompanied by images from The New Abolitionists. The program also features Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in a special presentation accompanied by images from the collections of Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

ROCO will close out their 17th season on **April 23** with "Tying Up Loose Ends," conducted by Rei Hotoda. The program centers around the world premiere of a work for large chamber orchestra by composer-in-residence Derek Bermel, *Industrial Scars*, based on J. Henry Fair's photography collection of the same title—capturing the beauty and destruction of industrial and human impacts on our planet—and will also include Viet Cuong's percussion concerto *Re(new)al*, Darius Milhaud's jazz-inspired 1923 work *Creation of the*

World, In a Blink of An Eye by Cynthia Lee Wong, and *The Sun Began to Fade* by Judah Adashi.

UNCHAMBERED Series

The ***Unchambered Series*** continues to highlight the distinct talents of ROCO's musicians through intimate, self-curated programs, featuring audience interaction. The series begins with "Ties That Bind" on **February 5**, spotlighting concertmaster Scott St. John and violinist Pasha Sabouri. On **March 12**, "Tapestry" will showcase trumpeters Joseph Foley and George Chase, and the ***Unchambered*** series will close on **April 2** with "Spinning Tales", featuring the ROCO Percussion Trio, presenting a world premiere by Quinn Mason.

CONNECTIONS Series

ROCO's ***Connections Series*** continues to take classical music outside of the concert hall through creative collaborations exploring unique spaces around Houston. The series kicks off October 9 at POST with "Mixed Messages", featuring the ROCO String Quartet in Elvis Costello's Juliet Letters plus other works, with dance by Houston Contemporary Dance Company and readings by Houston Poet Laureate Outspoken Bean.

On **November 19**, ROCO will perform the world premiere of Huang Ruo's *A Dust in Time* Passacaglia for Strings at Asia Society Texas Center. Structured similarly to a Tibetan sand mandala, the 60-minute uninterrupted musical meditation is slowly created live from

the central essence point, expanding outward into colored fullness, then to be subtracted back to its origination. The cycle fulfills the spiritual journey of traveling from nothing (emptiness), to something (fullness), and back to nothing (emptiness).

On **December 11**, the ROCO Brass Quintet will present “Yuletide Brunch & Brass” at Czech Center Museum Houston, in a morning of fellowship and fun celebrating the season.

On **January 13**, we return to Saint Arnold Brewing Company for “Beer & Brass”, ROCO’s annual tradition kicking off the new year, featuring the ROCO Brass Quintet.

On **January 22**, ROCO will return to Rienzi for “A House of My Own”, a Chicano-style, Schubertiade-inspired evening of music. The performance will feature a commission of songs by Derek Bermel, sung by mezzo-soprano Cecilia Duarte, and based on the work of Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros—who was born in 1952, the same year Rienzi was designed.

On **March 26**, ROCO will return to Holocaust Museum Houston for “Pulling at Strings”, a concert featuring Slovenian classical guitarist Mak Grgić performing the U.S. premiere of his Balkan Suite, based on music from his native Balkans, written for guitar and strings.

On **May 7**, ROCO presents “Interwoven” at Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, featuring the ROCO Brass in a unique site-specific commission by Marcus Maroney.

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING

September 25, 2021

Bursting at the Seams | In Concert

October 9, 2021

Mixed Messages @ POST | Connections

November 13, 2021

A Stitch in Time | In Concert

November 19, 2021

A Dust in Time @ Asia Society Texas Center | Connections

December 11, 2021

Yuletide Brunch & Brass @ Czech Center Museum Houston |
Connections

January 13, 2022

Beer & Brass @ Saint Arnold Brewing Co. | Connections

January 22, 2022

A House of My Own @ Rienzi | Connections

February 5, 2022

Ties That Bind | Unchambered

February 26, 2022

Canvassing the Earth | In Concert

March 12, 2022

Tapestry | Unchambered

March 26, 2022

Pulling at Strings @ Holocaust Museum Houston | Connections

April 2, 2022

Spinning Tales | Unchambered

April 12, 2022

ROCO Wind Trio @ Cypress Creek FACE | Connections

April 23, 2022

Tying Up Loose Ends | 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 over 110 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
917.331.2337

Greta Rimpo
greta@roco.org
713-665-2700 ext. 4