



american composers orchestra

news release

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PRESS CONTACT: Christina Jensen, Jensen Artists
646.536.7864 x1; christina@jensenartists.com

American Composers Orchestra Continues 40th Anniversary Season with Orchestra Underground: Past Forward

Friday, March 24, 2017 at 7:30pm



Featuring Steve Reich's *Tehillim*
Celebrating Reich's 80th Birthday

World Premieres by Paola Prestini,
Trevor Weston, and David Hertzberg

With vocalists Elizabeth Bates, Martha Cluver,
Mellissa Hughes, and Rachel Calloway
plus video artist Mami Kosemura

Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall | 57th & 7th Ave. | NYC
Tickets: \$43 & 51 at www.carnegiehall.org, 212-
247-7800, or the Carnegie Hall Box Office
(154 West 57th Street, NYC)

For more information:
www.americancomposers.org

New York, NY—**American Composers Orchestra (ACO)**, under the leadership of Artistic Director **Derek Bermel** and Music Director **George Manahan**, continues its **40th Anniversary Season** on **Friday, March 24, 2017 at 7:30pm** with **Orchestra Underground: Past Forward** at **Carnegie Hall's** subterranean **Zankel Hall**. Now in its 13th year, Orchestra Underground continues as ACO's subversive and entrepreneurial redefinition of the orchestra as an elastic ensemble. Led by Manahan, Past Forward illustrates the role the past plays in the present, from composers' own personal explorations of their roots, to broader investigations of the universal role of memory and recollection.

The concert celebrates **Steve Reich's** 80th birthday with a performance of his *Tehillim*, presented as part of Reich's season-long residency as holder of Carnegie Hall's Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair, featuring **Elizabeth Bates**, lyric soprano; **Martha Cluver**, lyric soprano; **Mellissa Hughes**, alto; and **Rachel Calloway**, high soprano; the world premiere of **Paola Prestini's** *The Hotel that Time Forgot* with video by **Mami Kosemura**; the world premiere of **Trevor Weston's** *Flying Fish*, which honors the composer's Barbadian heritage; and the world premiere of ACO's 2015 Underwood New Music Readings commission winner **David Hertzberg's** *Chamber Symphony*.

“This spring we look forward to celebrating the 80th birthday of one of America’s truly revolutionary composers, Steve Reich, with the only New York City performances of two contemporary classics – *Tehillim* as part of this concert in March and *The Desert Music* at Symphony Space in April,” says ACO Artistic Director Derek Bermel. “ACO is also thrilled to feature brand new commissions by Paola Prestini, David Hertzberg, and Trevor Weston, each exploring their own roots to illuminate the universality of heritage and memory.”

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Steve Reich**’s music has been influential to composers and mainstream musicians all over the world. Reich’s music is known for steady pulse, repetition, and a fascination with canons; it combines rigorous structures with propulsive rhythms and seductive instrumental color. Reich’s 1981 masterpiece *Tehillim* sets four Psalms, one for each movement of the piece, and is written for four women’s voices and orchestra. The piece is a response to Reich’s rekindled interest in his religious background in Judaism. It has been performed and recorded numerous times, for labels including Nonesuch, ECM, and Cantaloupe Music; ACO Music Director George Manahan led the world premiere recording with Reich’s ensemble in 1981 for ECM.

Reich writes of the piece in his note, “*Tehillim* (pronounced ‘the-hill-leem’) is the original Hebrew word for Psalms. Literally translated it means ‘praises,’ and it derives from the three letter Hebrew root ‘hey, lamed, lamed’ (hll) which is also the root of halleluyah. *Tehillim* is a setting of Psalms 19:2-5 (19:1-4 in Christian translations), 34:13-15 (34:12-14 in Christian translations), 18:26-27 (18:25-26 in Christian translations) and 150:4-6. . . The use of extended melodies, imitative counterpoint functional harmony and full orchestration may well suggest renewed interest in Classical or, more accurately, Baroque and earlier Western musical practice. The non-vibrato, non-operatic vocal production will also remind listeners of Western music prior to 1750. However, the overall sound of *Tehillim* and in particular the intricately interlocking percussion writing which, together with the text, forms the basis of the entire work, marks this music as unique by introducing a basic musical element that one does not find in earlier Western practice including the music of this century. *Tehillim* may thus be heard as traditional and new at the same time.”

Paola Prestini, a graduate of The Juilliard School, is a composer and impresario whose interdisciplinary vision is helping to shape the future of new music. Named one of the “Top 100 Composers in the World under 40” (*NPR*), her music has been commissioned by and been performed at Carnegie Hall, by the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, New York City Opera, and the Kronos Quartet. Prestini’s compositions have been performed worldwide, from the Kennedy Center, BAM, and the Park Avenue Armory, to London’s Barbican Centre. Prestini serves as Visionary-in-Chief of VisionIntoArt, the non-profit multimedia production company she co-founded as a student in 1999, which is dedicated to fostering collaborative, interdisciplinary new music. She is also the Creative and Executive Director of National Sawdust.

The Hotel That Time Forgot, an ACO commission with support from the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, is a collaboration between Prestini and Tokyo-based video artist **Mami Kosemura**. The work is inspired by The Grand Hotel Palmyra in Lebanon, which hasn’t closed since it opened in 1874, even as war has raged in the region. The owner Rima Hussein has said, “No one has a right to touch hotel Palmyra, except for time.” Prestini says, “I became fascinated with the hotel when I first came upon a video showing its interior. It became clear that I wanted to create a sonic orchestral world to relive its memories.”

Composer **Trevor Weston**'s honors include the George Ladd Prix de Paris from the University of California, Berkeley, a Goddard Lieberman Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and the MacDowell Colony. His works include *Truth Tones*, written for the Boston Children's Chorus and performed in a national television broadcast honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; a 50-minute dramatic work titled *4* which honors the lives of the four girls killed in the 1963 Birmingham, Alabama church bombing performed by Trilogy: An Opera Company; *Paths of Peace* for choir and chamber orchestra using the text of the Long Island slave Jupiter Hammond, premiered by The Manhattan Choral Ensemble; and *Griot Legacies* which celebrates the African American Spiritual in new ways for adult choir, children's choir and orchestra, premiered by the Boston Landmarks Orchestra in 2014. Weston received his B.A. from Tufts University and continued his studies at the University of California, Berkeley where he earned his M. A. and Ph. D. in Music Composition. He is currently an Associate Professor of Music at Drew University in Madison, NJ.

Weston's new piece for ACO, ***Flying Fish***, co-commissioned by ACO and Carnegie Hall, is inspired by his Barbadian heritage, where the flying fish is a national symbol. He says of the piece, "Images of flying fish have been ubiquitous in my life. Most of my family comes from Barbados so I do not remember a time before knowing about flying fish. Flying fish 'fly' to escape predators. They leap out of the water, gliding great distances to physically transcend problems in the same way that Daedalus, from Greek mythology, and the magical Africans in 'The People Could Fly' flew away from danger. My piece celebrates the elusive qualities of this animal as a magical symbol of spiritual agency. Every time I visit Barbados, I feel like I am walking with my ancestors and with the vast history of the African presence in the Americas and the Caribbean. On the island, I feel like I am figuratively visiting the sound source of the resonance that I live. *Flying Fish* honors the African roots of Bajan (Barbadian) culture and African diasporic expression."

An innovative young composer, **David Hertzberg** has been honored with the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, two ASCAP Morton Gould Awards, the Fromm Commission from Harvard University, and the Aaron Copland Award from Copland House. Noteworthy in his rapidly growing career is his position as Composer-in-Residence with Opera Philadelphia and Music Theatre Group. Last season, his chamber opera *The Rose Elf* was featured on Opera Philadelphia's Double Exposure program and his concert work *Sunday Morning* was premiered by New York City Opera. Other recent commissions were premiered by pianist Steven Lin and violinist In Mo Yang at Carnegie Hall, soprano Julia Bullock, and the PRISM Quartet. Hertzberg's *for none shall gaze upon the Father and live* will be performed by the Kansas City Symphony this season. *femminina, oscura* for the New Juilliard Ensemble and *Nympharum* for high soprano and the Juilliard Orchestra were both premiered at Alice Tully Hall; the latter garnered the William Schuman Prize from BMI and the Arthur Friedman Prize from The Juilliard School. Hertzberg has held residencies at Tanglewood, Yaddo, IC Hong Kong, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and Young Concert Artists, where he served as Composer-in-Residence. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The Juilliard School, and an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute.

Hertzberg's new ***Chamber Symphony*** for ACO is a result of his Underwood Emerging Composer Commission win in 2015 for his piece, *Spectre of the Spheres*. *Chamber Symphony* draws inspiration from American poet Wallace Stevens' "Of Mere Being." Hertzberg says of the work, "In writing my *Chamber Symphony*, I sought to

create something essential, pared down. In the argument, voices speak to one other across vistas, from different sides of time, finding resonances both sympathetic and volatile.”

About George Manahan, ACO Music Director

In his seventh season as Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra, the wide-ranging and versatile **George Manahan** has had an esteemed career embracing everything from opera to the concert stage, the traditional to the contemporary. In addition to his work with ACO, Manahan continues his commitment to working with young musicians as Director of Orchestral Studies at the Manhattan School of Music as well as guest conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music. He also serves as Music Director of the Portland Opera.

Manahan was Music Director at New York City Opera for 14 seasons. There he helped envision the organization’s groundbreaking VOX program, a series of workshops and readings that have provided unique opportunities for numerous composers to hear their new concepts realized, and introduced audiences to exciting new compositional voices. In addition to established composers such as Mark Adamo, David Del Tredici, Lewis Spratlan, Robert X. Rodriguez, Lou Harrison, Bernard Rands, and Richard Danielpour, Manahan has introduced works by composers on the rise including Adam Silverman, Elodie Lauten, Mason Bates, and David T. Little. Among his many world premieres are Charles Wuorinen’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, David Lang’s *Modern Painters*, and the New York premiere of Richard Danielpour’s *Margaret Garner*.

In May 2011 Manahan was honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his “career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time that has enriched and enabled Concert Music both at home and abroad.” His recent Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber’s *Antony and Cleopatra* was hailed by audiences and critics alike. *The New York Times* reported, “The fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have encountered.” In 2013, Manahan was awarded the Alice M. Ditson Award for his outstanding commitment to the work of emerging composers.

George Manahan’s recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich’s *Tehillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas’s *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson’s *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker’s *Emmeline*, in addition to dozens of premiere recordings he has made with ACO. As music director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for 12 years, he was honored four times by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his commitment to 20th century music.

About ACO

Founded in 1977, American Composers Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world dedicated to the creation, performance, preservation, and promulgation of music by American composers. ACO makes the creation of new opportunities for American composers and new American orchestral music its central purpose. Through concerts at Carnegie Hall and other venues, recordings, internet and radio broadcasts, educational programs, New Music Readings, and commissions, ACO identifies today’s brightest emerging composers, champions prominent established composers as well as those lesser-known, and increases regional, national, and international awareness of the infinite variety of American orchestral music, reflecting geographic, stylistic, and temporal diversity. ACO also serves as an incubator of ideas, research, and talent, as a catalyst for growth and change among orchestras, and as an advocate for American composers and their music. ACO programs

seek to innovate and experiment, educate students and the public, and open the orchestra to diverse new influences and audiences.

To date, ACO has performed music by 800 American composers, including 350 world premieres and newly commissioned works. Among the orchestra's innovative programs have been SONiC: Sounds of a New Century, a nine-day citywide festival in New York of music by more than 100 composers age 40 and under; Sonidos de las Américas, six annual festivals devoted to Latin American composers and their music; Coming to America, a program immersing audiences in the ongoing evolution of American music through the work of immigrant composers; Orchestra Tech, a long-term initiative to integrate new digital technologies in the symphony orchestra; Improvise!, a festival devoted to the exploration of improvisation and the orchestra; coLABoratory: Playing It UNSafe, a new laboratory for the research and development of experimental new works for orchestra; and Orchestra Underground, ACO's entrepreneurial cutting-edge orchestral ensemble that embraces new technology, eclectic instruments, influences, and spatial orientation of the orchestra, new experiments in the concert format, and multimedia and multi-disciplinary collaborations.

Composer development has been at the core of ACO's mission since its founding. In addition to its annual Underwood New Music Readings and Commission, ACO also provides a range of additional educational and professional development activities, including composer residencies and fellowships. In 2008, ACO launched EarShot, a multi-institutional network that assists orchestras around the country in mounting new music readings. Recent and upcoming Earshot programs have included the Detroit, Berkeley, La Jolla, Nashville, Memphis, Columbus, Colorado, San Diego Symphonies, the New York Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony, and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Recently, EarShot introduced an initiative to provide career development and commissions for emerging female composers, and launched an online archive featuring audio excerpts, program notes, and score samples by more than 140 composers whose works have been performed through the EarShot Network. The Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, launched in 2010, supports jazz artists who desire to write for the symphony. For more information visit www.EarShotnetwork.org.

Among the honors ACO has received are special awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and from BMI recognizing the orchestra's outstanding contribution to American music. ACO is the 2015 recipient of the Champion of New Music Award given by American Composers Forum. ASCAP has awarded its annual prize for adventurous programming to ACO 36 times, singling out ACO as "the orchestra that has done the most for American music in the United States." ACO received the inaugural MetLife Award for Excellence in Community Engagement, and a proclamation from the New York City Council. ACO recordings are available on ARGO, CRI, ECM, Point, Phoenix USA, MusicMasters, Nonesuch, Tzadik, New World Records, InstantEncore.com, Amazon.com and iTunes. ACO's digital albums include *Playing It UNSafe* (March 2011), *Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1* (February 2012), *Orchestra Underground: X10D* (June 2012), *Orchestra Underground: Tech & Techno* (July 2014), and *SONiC Double Live* (July 2016), a collection of premiere performances from its groundbreaking SONiC: Sounds of a New Century festival. ACO has also released *Orchestra Underground: A-V*, a groundbreaking album of multimedia works available for free streaming at www.vimeo.com/channels/orchestraunderground. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

This press release is available online at www.americancomposers.org/press-media

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EarShot is a program of American Composers Orchestra in partnership with American Composers Forum, the League of American Orchestras, and New Music USA. Made possible with the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding provided by the League of American Orchestras with support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.

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Derek Bermel, *Artistic Director* | George Manahan, *Music Director*

Dennis Russell Davies, *Conductor Laureate* | Robert Beaser, *Artistic Director Laureate*

244 West 54th Street, Suite 805 | New York, NY 10019-5515

Phone: 212.977.8495 | Fax: 212.977.8995 | Web: www.americancomposers.org



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2016-2017 Calendar

**Friday, October 28, 2016 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Seventh Avenue and 57th Street. New York, NY**

Orchestra Underground: Contempo-Scary Music

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor

Nancy Allen Lundy, narrator and soprano

Maxwell Tfrin, electronics engineer

PAUL MORAVEC: *The Overlook Hotel Suite* from *The Shining* (World Premiere, ACO commission)

JUDITH SHATIN: *Black Moon* (World Premiere, ACO/Carnegie Hall commission)

BERNARD HERRMANN: *Psycho Suite*

DAVID DEL TREDICI: *Dracula*

Information: www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2016/10/28/0730/PM/American-Composers-Orchestra

**Friday, March 24, 2017 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Seventh Avenue and 57th Street. New York, NY**

Orchestra Underground: Past Forward

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor

Elizabeth Bates, lyric soprano

Martha Cluver, lyric soprano

Melissa Hughes, alto

Rachel Calloway, high soprano

Mami Kosemura, video artist

STEVE REICH: *Tehillim*

DAVID HERTZBERG: *Chamber Symphony* (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood commission)

TREVOR WESTON: *Flying Fish* (World Premiere, ACO/Carnegie Hall commission)

PAOLA PRESTINI: *The Hotel That Time Forgot* (World Premiere, ACO/Toulmin commission)

Information: www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2017/3/24/0730/PM/American-Composers-Orchestra

**Sunday, April 30, 2017, (time TBD) – Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space
2537 Broadway at 95th Street, New York, NY**

American Composers Orchestra in Wall to Wall Steve Reich

Alan Pierson, Guest Conductor

Steve Reich: *The Desert Music*

Information: www.symphonyspace.org/event/9383/Music/wall-to-wall-steve-reich

**Tuesday, May 23, 2017 at 8pm – Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space
2537 Broadway at 95th Street, New York, NY**

American Composers Orchestra: ACO Parables

Rossen Milanov, Guest Conductor

Sharon Isbin, guitar

David Tinervia, baritone

Luke DuBois, video

BRIGHT SHENG: *Postcards* (New York Premiere)

JOHN CORIGLIANO: *Troubadours: Variations for Guitar and Orchestra*

CARLOS SIMON: *Portraits of a Queen* (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood commission)

NINA C. YOUNG: *Out of whose womb came the ice* for baritone, orchestra, & electronics (World Premiere, ACO/Jerome Foundation commission)

Information: www.symphonyspace.org/event/9396/Music/american-composers-orchestra-parables

**Wednesday & Thursday, June 22 & 23, 2017 – Cary Hall at The DiMenna Center
450 West 37th Street, New York, NY
Underwood New Music Readings & Commission**

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor

Derek Bermel, Artistic Director

Libby Larsen, David Rakowski, Trevor Weston, Mentor Composers

ACO's annual roundup of the country's brightest young and emerging composers. Participating composers TBA.

Information: www.americancomposers.org/2016/08/15/orchestra-underwood-26th-anniversary

Artists and repertoire subject to change.