American Composers Orchestra Announces

Composer Peter Fahey Wins $15,000 21st Annual Underwood Emerging Composer Commission

Composer Ryan Chase Wins Annual Underwood Audience Choice Award

Deadline for the 2013 Underwood New Music Readings: December 10, 2012
Information: www.americancomposers.org/nmr

Peter Fahey: www.peterfahey.com  |  Ryan Chase: www.ryanmchase.com
American Composers Orchestra: www.americancomposers.org
For high-resolution photos of Fahey and Chase: www.christinajensenpr.com (in ACO’s gallery)

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra (ACO) is pleased to announce that composer Peter Fahey has been named the winner of ACO’s 2012 Annual Underwood Commission, bringing him a $15,000 purse for a work to be premiered by ACO in a future season. Chosen from six finalists during ACO’s 20th annual Underwood New Music Readings on June 1 and 2, 2012, in one of the most coveted opportunities for emerging composers in the United States, Fahey won the top prize with his work Impressions.

In addition, for the third year, audience members at the New Music Readings had a chance to make their voices heard through the Audience Choice Award. The winner this year was composer Ryan Chase, for his piece The Light Fantastic. As the winner, Chase was commissioned to compose an original mobile phone ringtone which is available to everyone who voted, free of charge.

Of Peter Fahey’s music, ACO Artistic Director Robert Beaser said, “Peter uses sound and color as building blocks to create arresting structures. His language is filled with abstractions that aggregate into clear and vivid musical images.” Underwood New Music Readings mentor composer Steven Stucky praised Fahey’s “unconventional uses of the orchestra which create a world of beguiling fantasy and delicate poetry,” and fellow mentor composer Melinda Wagner described his work as, “elegant, meticulously crafted music, rich in sonic, rhythmic and textural complexity.”

Upon winning the Underwood commission, Peter Fahey said, “Taking part in the ACO Readings back in June was by itself such a rewarding experience, I can hardly believe I’ve been given the commission as
well. It’s a wonderful opportunity. I’m looking forward to working with the orchestra again and am excited about writing a brand new piece especially for ACO.”

Born and raised in Ireland, Peter Fahey studied composition with Eric Sweeney at the Waterford Institute of Technology, with David Horne and Anthony Gilbert at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, England, and, informally, at the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, Germany. He has also attended the Darmstadt Festival; the TACTUS Young Composers’ Forum, Belgium; the Weimarer Meisterkurse Kompositions-Workshop; and the Aspen Music Festival and School Advanced Masterclass Program. Fahey has studied with Roberto Sierra and Steven Stucky at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and in spring 2012 was an exchange scholar at Columbia University. In addition to ACO, Peter has worked with the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, Continuum, Ensemble Musiques Nouvelle, the Festival Chamber Orchestra (Ithaca), the i0 Quartet, the Players Chamber Ensemble, the Royal Northern College of Music Symphony Orchestra, and the Talea Ensemble. He is currently an artist-in-residence at ART342 in Fort Collins, Colorado, and in spring 2013, he will be in residence at the MacDowell Colony, where he plans to work on his new piece for ACO. This is his first commission for a professional orchestra.

Fahey is the winner of a number of other awards for composition, including the Stephen Kaske Fellowship at the 2012 Wellesley Composers Conference, the 2012 Robbins Family Prize in Composition from Cornell University, a MacDowell Colony Fellowship, a Susan and Ford Schumann Fellowship at the Aspen Music Festival and School, the Franz Liszt Stipendium from the Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar, and a number of awards from the Arts Council of Ireland.

About the Underwood New Music Readings
The 21st Annual Underwood New Music Readings were under the direction of ACO’s Artistic Director, composer Robert Beaser, and were led by ACO Music Director George Manahan, with ACO Creative Advisor Derek Bermel and mentor composers Melinda Wagner and Steven Stucky. The conductor, mentor composers, and principal players from ACO provided critical feedback to each of the participants during and after the sessions. In addition to the Readings, the composer participants took part in workshops and one-on-one sessions with industry professionals. This year’s New Music Readings attracted 130 submissions from emerging composers around the country. In addition to Fahey, the participants were:

Ryan Chase has had music performed by ensembles such as Alaria, CIRCE, Contemporaneous, Indiana University’s New Music Ensemble, Mannes Orchestra, Chelsea Symphony, SUNY Purchase Percussion Ensemble, and new music soprano soloist Ariadne Greif. Chase’s awards include the William Schuman Prize of the 2011 BMI Student Composer Awards, First Prize in the 2011 National Association of Composers USA Young Composers’ Competition, and the 2008 Bohuslav Martinů Award. Chase is currently pursuing a Doctorate at Indiana University.

Michael-Thomas Foumai, a Native Hawaiian, is a violinist, violist, conductor and composer. His music is “exciting, energetic, full of vivid passages and picturesque moods” (Honolulu Advertiser) and has been praised for its “technical mastery and grace” (Los Angeles Times). Foumai was recently awarded the 2012 Jacob Druckman Prize from the Aspen Music Festival and School, and was a participant in the 2011 EarShot New Music Readings with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Paul Kerekes’ music is described as “striking…ecstatic…dramatic” (WQXR), and has been performed by ensembles TwoSense, Second Instrumental Unit, Stonewall Chorale, Mannes Preparatory Division Choir,
and Norfolk Contemporary Ensemble. After completing an undergraduate degree at Queens College, Kerekes was invited to accompany *eighth blackbird* as a composer and performer at the summer festival of Music10 in Blonay, Switzerland. Kerekes is currently completing a masters degree at Yale School of Music under the instruction of Martin Bresnick.

**Pin Hsin Lin** is currently a doctoral student in composition at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she studies with Erik Lund, Zack Browning, Steven Taylor, Reynold Tharp, and Scott Wyatt. Lin hails from Kaohsiung and Taipei in Taiwan, and received her Master’s degree in Composition from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and her Bachelor’s degree in Composition from Roosevelt University.

**Benjamin Taylor** writes music for a variety of chamber ensembles, jazz combos and big bands, wind bands, choirs, and experimental ensembles. His prizes and honors include a 2011 BMI Student Composers Award, a Barlow Endowment Commission, and a 2011 ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award. Taylor recently started doctoral studies at Indiana University at Bloomington.

Writing for the symphony orchestra remains one of the supreme challenges for the aspiring composer. The subtleties of instrumental balance, timbre, and communication with the conductor and musicians are critical skills. Opportunities for composers to gain hands-on experience working with a professional orchestra are few. Since 1991 ACO’s New Music Readings have provided invaluable experience for emerging composers while serving as a vital resource to the music field by identifying a new generation of American composers. To date, more than 130 composers have participated in the Readings, including such award-winning composers as Melinda Wagner, Pierre Jalbert, Augusta Read Thomas, Randall Woolf, Jennifer Higdon, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Sebastian Currier, and ACO’s Creative Advisor, Derek Bermel.

The New Music Readings continue ACO’s emphasis on launching composers’ careers, a tradition that includes many of today’s top composers, such as Ellen Taaffe Zwilich and Joseph Schwantner, both of whom received Pulitzer Prizes for ACO commissions; and Robert Beaser, Ingram Marshall, Joan Tower, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Rouse, Sebastian Currier, and Tobias Picker, whom the orchestra championed when they were beginning their careers.

ACO’s 2011 winner, **Narong Prangcharoen**, received the top prize for his work *Pubbanimitta*. His newly commissioned work, *The Migration of Lost Souls*, was premiered by ACO at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall on October 26, 2012. The 22nd Annual New Music Readings are scheduled for **April 8-10, 2013** at The DiMenna Center for Classical Music in New York City. The submission deadline for composers interested in applying is **December 10, 2012** at 5pm Eastern. Complete submission guidelines and application are available at [www.americancomposers.org/nmr](http://www.americancomposers.org/nmr).

**About ACO**

Entering its 36th season in 2012-2013, 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.

To date, ACO has performed music by more than 600 American composers, including 200 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; 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 EarShot programs have included the Nashville and Memphis Symphonies, Colorado Symphony, New York Youth Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, and San Diego 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. ASCAP has awarded its annual prize for adventurous programming to ACO 34 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. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

###

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

Support for the Underwood New Music Readings comes from Paul Underwood, Fromm Music Foundation and with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

New York Community Trust, Open Society Foundations, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Virgil Thomson Foundation and the Paul Underwood Charitable Trust. ACO programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

american composers orchestra
Robert Beaser, Artistic Director | George Manahan, Music Director
Derek Bermel, Creative Advisor | Dennis Russell Davies, Conductor Laureate
Steven Sloane, Principal Guest Conductor
240 West 35th Street, Suite 405
New York, NY 10001-2506
Phone: 212.977.8495 | Fax: 212.977.8995 | Web: www.americancomposers.org