FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 6, 2011

PRESS CONTACT: Christina Jensen PR
646-536-7864; christina@christinajensenpr.com

American Composers Orchestra Announces

Narong Prangcharoen Wins $15,000 20th Annual Underwood Emerging Composer Commission and Audience Choice Award

Narong Prangcharoen: www.narongmusic.com
American Composers Orchestra: www.americancomposers.org

For high-resolution photos of Prangcharoen: www.christinajensenpr.com (in ACO’s gallery)

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra (ACO) is pleased to announce that composer Narong Prangcharoen has been named the winner of ACO’s 2011 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 3 and 4, 2011, in one of the most coveted opportunities for emerging composers in the United States, Prangcharoen won the top prize with his work Pubbanimitta (“Foreboding”).

Prangcharoen was also chosen as the winner of this year’s Audience Choice Award, selected by the audience by ballot at the Readings. As the winner, he was commissioned to compose an original mobile phone ringtone which is available to everyone who voted, free of charge. Prangcharoen’s ringtone utilizes traditional Thai instruments, recorded by the Music and Performing Arts Players at Burapha University.

Of Prangcharoen’s winning piece, Underwood mentor composer Paul Chihara said, “The music leaps off the page with a voluptuous sensuality from its first moments until it final perorations. It is well constructed and harmonically interesting: accessible and exotic, yet very individual and occasionally quirky in its orchestration and phrase structure. Mr. Prangcharoen writes music that reaches and moves his listeners with soaring melodies and intense rhythmic dance patterns.”

Augusta Read Thomas, an Underwood mentor composer for the readings, added, “Composer Narong Prangcharoen wrote a dazzling, vibrant work, which celebrates the effervescence of the Orchestra in a manner that I found exhilarating.”
Born in 1973, Prangcharoen studied with Chen Yi and received his doctoral degree from University of Missouri-Kansas City. Prangcharoen’s music has been called “absolutely captivating” by the Chicago Sun Times and has been performed in Asia, Australia, Europe and the U.S. His works have been heard at the Beijing Modern Music, MoMA Music and Grant Park Festivals, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and at the Library of Congress. Prangcharoen is also the winner of the Alexander Zemlinsky International Composition Competition and Pacific Symphony’s American Composers Competition Prizes, and the Toru Takemitsu Composition Award. He is currently teaching at the Community Music and Dance Academy of the Conservatory of Music, University of Missouri in Kansas City, and is the founder of the Thailand Composition Festival in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2007, the Thai government named Prangcharoen a Contemporary National Artist and awarded him the Silapathorn Award.

Upon winning the commission, Prangcharoen said, “I was astonished to be selected as the winner, especially when all of the composers who participated were so impressive. I am truly honored to be chosen, and am already looking forward to writing for ACO.”

About the Underwood New Music Readings

The 20th 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 creative director Derek Bermel and mentor composers Paul Chihara and Augusta Read Thomas. The conductors, 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 150 submissions from emerging composers around the country. In addition to Prangcharoen, the participants were:

Janet Jieru Chen (b. 1980) holds degrees from Taipei National University of the Arts, and has received scholarships to such music festivals as the International Music Courses in Darmstadt, the Composers Conference at Wellesley, and the Banff Summer Arts Festival. Composer Krzysztof Penderecki described her music as “original, no copying and truly Asian.”

Mukai Kôhei (b. 1966) has studied at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he trained with Nicholas Maw. He received his doctoral degree in Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where he studied with Chen Yi, James Mobberley and Paul Rudy.

Michael Djupstrom (b. 1980) studied composition at the University of Michigan. Other training included fellowships at the Tanglewood and Brevard Music Centers, the Aspen Music Festival, as well as studies in Paris with composer Betsy Jolas. In 2009 Djupstrom entered the Curtis Institute of Music as a composition student of Jennifer Higdon and Richard Danielpour.

Jordan Kuspa (b. 1985) was the winner of the 2010 ISCM–League of Composers Competition and the 2007 Robert Avalon Young Composers Competition. He is currently pursuing his doctorate at the Yale School of Music, where he has studied with Martin Bresnick, Ezra Laderman, Ingram Marshall, and Christopher Theofanidis.
Kate Soper (b. 1981) is a New York City-based composer and performer with a diverse background and interests. Soper received her Bachelors of Music from Rice University and is currently a DMA candidate at Columbia University, where her teachers have included Fred Lerdahl, Mario Davidovksy, Tristan Murail, and Fabien Lévy.

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 2010 winner, Christopher Stark, received the top prize for his work Ignatian Excercises. His newly commissioned work, . . . and start west, will be premiered by ACO at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall on October 14, 2011 as part of SONiC: Sounds of a New Century – a nine-day festival featuring music written in the 21st century by composers age 40 and under, produced by ACO and The Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. The 21st Annual New Music Readings are scheduled for June 1-3, 2012 at The DiMenna Center for Classical Music in New York City. The submission deadline for composers interested in applying is November 14, 2011 at 5pm Eastern. Complete submission guidelines and application are available at www.americancomposers.org/nmr.

About ACO

Now entering its 35th year, 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 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 the composer residencies, and the Van Lier Emerging Composer Fellowship. 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, and Buffalo Philharmonic. For more information visit www.EarShotnetwork.org.

New for 2011, ACO presents SONiC – Sounds of a New Century – a city-wide festival of music written in the 21st century by composers age 40-and-under, Oct. 14-22, 2011. SONiC presents the largest and most startling array of what composers are up to now, with 9 days of concerts, 16 ensembles, and more than 100 young composers. For more information visit www.SONiCfestival.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 33 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 Audience 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, and 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, The Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University 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 Isak and Rose Weinman Foundation. ACO programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts and by New York City Council Member Gale A. Brewer.

**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](http://www.americancomposers.org)