American Composers Orchestra Announces

22nd Annual Underwood New Music Readings
Monday, April 8 at 10am (working rehearsal)
Tuesday, April 9 at 7:30pm (run-through)

Featuring Six of the Nation’s Top Emerging Composers
One Composer to Win $15,000 Commission, Another to Win Audience Choice Award

Conducted by ACO Music Director George Manahan

DiMenna Center for Classical Music | 450 W. 37th St., NYC
More information: 212.977.8495 or www.americancomposers.org

FREE & open to the public, reservations recommended.
April 8, 10am: Working Rehearsal reservations: http://unmrehearsal.eventbrite.com
April 9, 7:30pm: Run-Through reservations: http://unmreading.eventbrite.com
April 9, 10am: Professional Development Seminar reservations: http://unmrworkshop.eventbrite.com

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra’s (ACO) 22nd Annual Underwood New Music Readings will take place on Monday, April 8 and Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music (450 W. 37th St., NYC). The Readings include two public events – a working rehearsal on Monday at 10am, and a run-through on Tuesday at 7:30pm. Both events are free and open to the public, giving audiences a chance to look behind the scenes at the process involved in bringing brand new, stylistically diverse orchestral music to life.

For more than a generation, ACO’s new music readings for emerging composers have been providing all-important career development and public exposure to the country’s most promising up-and-coming composers, with over 130 composers participating. Readings alumni have gone on to win every major composition award, including the Pulitzer, Grammy, Grawemeyer, American Academy of Arts & Letters, and Rome Prizes. Orchestras around the globe have commissioned ACO Readings alumni.

This year, six of the nation’s most promising composers in the early stages of their professional careers have been selected from over 150 submissions received from around the country. The selected composers – Jonathan Blumhofer, Louis Chiappetta, Joshua Groffman, Saad Haddad, Arthur J. McCaffrey, and Nina Young – represent a broad spectrum of musical backgrounds and sound worlds. Following the Readings, one composer will be chosen to receive a $15,000 commission to write a new piece for ACO, to be premiered during the orchestra’s 2014-2015 season.
The 2011 Underwood New Music Readings winner, Narong Prangcharoen, wrote The Migration of Lost Souls for ACO, which premiered it in October 2012 at Carnegie Hall. The New York Times hailed the piece as the “most successful” of the evening, praising it as an “atmospheric work that weaves some of the spiritual and vernacular sounds of Mr. Prangcharoen’s native Thailand into a skillfully orchestrated tapestry.” ACO’s 2012 winner, Peter Fahey, received the top prize with his work Impressions. His newly commissioned work, A Mirror to Kathleen’s Face, will be premiered by ACO at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall on October 25, 2013.

Audience members at the Readings will also have a chance to make their voices heard through the Audience Choice Award. On both April 8 and 9, audience members will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite pieces, and the winning composer will be commissioned to compose an original mobile phone ringtone. The ringtone will be available free of charge to everyone who voted.

The 22nd Annual Underwood New Music Readings are under the direction of ACO’s Artistic Director, composer Robert Beaser, and will be conducted by ACO Music Director George Manahan, with Christopher Theofanidis and Joan Tower as mentor composers. The conductors, mentor composers, and principal players from ACO provide critical feedback to each of the participants during and after the sessions.

In addition, this year the Readings offer composers, students, or anyone interested in learning more about the business of being a composer a Professional Development Seminar on Tuesday, April 9 from 10am-2:30pm at the DiMenna Center. Workshop topics include Intellectual Property and Copyright Law, Engraving and Self-Publishing, Support and Fundraising for Composers, and Publicity and Promotion. The cost for the Seminar is $25, which includes lunch. Reservations can be made at http://unmrworkshop.eventbrite.com.

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.

2013 Underwood New Music Readings Composers & Their Works

Jonathan Blumhofer: Diversions

For more information: www.jonathanblumhofer.com

Composer Jonathan Blumhofer was born in 1979 in Brooklyn, NY. His first musical activities involved studying violin and piano, and he later took up the viola. Jonathan’s compositions have received numerous awards and honors, including recognition from ASCAP, Massachusetts Cultural Council, Longfellow International Composers Competition, Boston University, and Boston Conservatory, among others. His
compositions have been performed and recorded by a number of ensembles in the United States and Europe, including the Xanthos Ensemble, Juventas New Music Ensemble, and Camerata Chicago. Jonathan has taught at Clark University and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, in Worcester, MA, and at Gordon College in Wenham, MA. He earned his doctorate from Boston University, his master’s degree from Boston Conservatory, and his bachelor’s degree from Wheaton College. His principal teachers include Edwin Childs, Dalit Warshaw, Jan Swafford, Joshua Fineberg, Richard Cornell, and Samuel Headrick. Of his work, Samuel says, “Jonathan has a wonderful ear for orchestral color, and his unique sounds and interesting textures are creatively and effectively used to create well-structured, innovative new compositions that are musically interesting and innovative, highly expressive, and dramatically compelling.”

Jonathan also studied with Allain Gaussin and Andre Bon at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, and with Ladislav Kubik at the Czech-American Summer Music Institute in Prague. The New Music Readings will be his first experience working with a professional orchestra.

Of his piece for the Readings, Diversions, Jonathan says, “Diversions is my first purely orchestral work; as its title suggests, I aimed to write a piece that was entertaining and lighthearted in character. Diversions is dedicated to Andrew Johnston, the son of long-time family friends, Jim and Lisa Johnston. Between 2001 and 2003, I dedicated three short pieces to each of Andrew’s older sisters. When Andrew was born in 2004, his father requested that any piece I write for Andrew be suitably big and loud, ‘preferably with anvils.’ Alas, I couldn’t bring myself to include an anvil in the scoring for Diversions, though I trust a log drum and some tom-toms will suffice.”

**Louis Chiappetta: Chroma**

Louis Chiappetta (b.1989) is a New York-based composer. His recent projects have included Fracture, a series of clarinet miniatures written in collaboration with choreographer Thomas Peacock and the London Contemporary Dance School, and Echoes of Embers for baritone and small ensemble. In March 2012 Louis participated in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute professional training workshop with Kaija Saariaho and Anssi Karttunen, which included the premiere of his trio Loops, Clocks, and Shadows at Zankel Hall. Louis began his formal composition studies at Mannes College of Music’s Preparatory Division at the age of thirteen. He later went on to study with Keith Fitch at the Cleveland Institute of Music where he received his bachelor’s degree in 2011. Keith describes Louis as, “among the most talented young composers I have encountered.”

Louis was awarded a Fulbright grant by the U.S. Department of State and spent the 2011-2012 academic year as a postgraduate scholar at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, where he studied with Julian Anderson. This is his first experience working with a professional orchestra.

Of his piece Chroma, he says, “In Chroma I set out to write a piece that tries to fuse my own musical vocabulary with Morton Feldman’s painterly approach. I am trying to treat musical ideas as if they were strips of color, building a structure that creates tension through juxtaposing distinctive materials in ever changing ways. Chroma also draws inspiration from my interest in contemporary literature. I was reading David Foster Wallace’s unfinished novel The Pale King while working on it, and I was struck by the unique way Wallace employed nonlinear narratives to gradually reveal who characters are and how they’ve come to know each other.”
Joshua Groffman: music from elsewhere
For more information: www.joshuagroffman.com

Joshua Groffman (b. 1984) of Millbrook, NY has written works for orchestral, vocal, and chamber ensembles, as well as for electronic media, theater, and film. His music has been performed by groups including Ensemble Laboratorium, the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, the Delaware Valley Chorale, the Indiana University Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, and the Cornell University Chamber Singers, and selected for performance at festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, June in Buffalo, SEAMUS National Conference, Florida State University New Music Festival, the CUNY POP! Conference, Midwest Composers Symposium, and the 60x60 VoxNovus New York Minutes Mix.

The Readings will be Joshua’s first experience working with a professional orchestra. He graduated magna cum laude from Cornell University in 2007, where he completed double majors in music and history. While at Cornell, he studied composition with Roberto Sierra and Steven Stucky and piano with Xak Bjerken and Malcolm Bilson. Joshua holds Doctor of Music (2012) and Master of Music (2009) degrees from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he studied composition with Sven-David Sandström, P.Q. Phan, Claude Baker, Aaron Travers, and Don Freund and computer music with Jeffrey Hass and John Gibson. He currently teaches composition and theory at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University.

Christopher Theofanidis, UMNR Mentor Composer and Yale University professor, praises Joshua’s “beautiful and at times sensuous approach to sound and texture.”

The title of Joshua’s piece, music from elsewhere, comes from a passage in Margaret Atwood’s novel The Robber Bride. He explains, “The title evokes, for me, a sense of dichotomy between two types of music: One that is fully present, audible, and familiar to us, and another which is more mysterious, emerging into our perception only in fits and starts – the ‘music from elsewhere.’ The idea of this dichotomy seems to capture a facet of the experience of daily life, namely, that if prosaic and familiar concerns largely shape our existence, they are occasionally interrupted by a sense that something larger and more fundamental is at work behind the scenes. Music from elsewhere attempts to capture that sense of an ineffable, larger something.”

Saad Haddad: Maelstrom
For more information: www.saadnhaddad.com

Saad N. Haddad (b. 1992) is an Arab-American composer based in Los Angeles whose music showcases his Middle-Eastern heritage. A junior at the University of Southern California, he is majoring in Music Composition with a minor in Cinematic Arts. In addition to his concert work, Saad has composed the soundtracks to eighteen short films, eight which were recorded live by the Thornton School of Music at the John Williams Scoring Stage. He is currently scoring “Core Overload,” a video game thesis being developed at USC. In the summer of 2011, he was selected as the youngest of fourteen students across the United States to study with Professor Samuel Adler of the Juilliard School in Berlin as part of the Freie Universitat in Berlin International Summer Program. His cello duo piece, Zwiegespräch, was premiered at the end of the program and was performed at the University of Michigan and the Juilliard School during the 2011-12 season.

Saad has been a finalist in the 2012 ASCAP Morton Gould Award contest and was a member of the first group of high school composers to participate in the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Composer Fellowship
Program under the direction of Steven Stucky. His composition professors include Frank Ticheli, Mark Weiser, Stephen Hartke, Samuel Adler, Donald Crockett, and Steven Stucky. Mark says, “Saad is a very gifted young man with exceptional composition skills, particularly in the area of orchestra music. Maelstrom is demonstrative of these abilities, particularly for its idiomatic and colorful orchestrations as well as its strong musical affect.”

Maelstrom was selected as an alternate for the 2012 Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute. Of the piece, Saad says, “Maelstrom will keep people right on the edge of their seats, holding on for dear life, as their ship, the concert hall, catches a devastating current that puts them at the heart of an unrelenting storm.”

Arthur J. McCaffrey: Thank You for Waiting

Arthur J. McCaffrey (b. 1973) has received commissions from the Tanglewood Music Center and the Radius Ensemble, and his music has been performed by the New Fromm Players and members of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Alarm Will Sound, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and the Chiara Quartet. A native of the Boston area, Arthur has been an active singer, guitarist, and songwriter since high school. He studied composition at Rice University, as well as at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama with composer James MacMillan. He has just completed his doctorate in music composition with composers Donald Crockett and Stephen Hartke at the University of Southern California. Arthur currently lives in southern California, where he teaches music theory and aural skills at USC, composition through the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Composer Fellowship Program, and composition and musical analysis at the Longy School of Music of Bard College’s Los Angeles-based Masters of Arts in Teaching program. Arthur is currently at work on his own composition/musician documentary series This Is What Really Happened for solo and pre-recorded instruments, and is also member of the Portland (OR)-based band Planes Intersect.

Arthur says, “The title of this piece, Thank You for Waiting, could easily serve as a note to any audience of my music, but here specifically it expresses my hope that the unsettled and unresolved nature of the musical material will be heard as a texture in and of itself, and that the ‘waiting’ on the part of the listener will become its own reward. Additionally, as this piece was my doctoral dissertation in composition at the University of Southern California, the title is a very direct message to my wife, family and professors, all of whom did lots of waiting of their own while I finished this piece.”

ACO Artistic Director Robert Beaser scores Arthur’s originality very high, and says, “it breaks rules and may crash and burn, but it is quite compelling.”

Nina Young: Remnants

For more information: www.ninacyoung.com

Nina C. Young (b.1984) is a New York-based composer who writes instrumental and electronic music. Her pieces incorporate her research of blending amplification and live electronics into instrumental ensembles, always with a view toward creating a natural and cohesive sound world. Nina’s music has been performed by ensembles such as the Orkest de Ereprijs, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, JACK Quartet, Yarn/Wire and Sixtrum. Her music has received honors from BMI, the International Alliance for Women in Music, and the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States. She is currently a doctoral fellow at Columbia University, studying with Fred Lerdahl, Brad Garton, and George Lewis, where she also teaches electroacoustic
composition at the Computer Music Center. Fred says, “Nina has real promise as a composer, not only of electro-acoustic music but also of instrumental works and a combination of the two.”

In 2011 Nina earned a master’s degree in music composition from McGill University, studying with Sean Ferguson. She completed her undergraduate studies at MIT, receiving degrees in ocean engineering and music, in addition to holding a research assistantship at the MIT Media Lab. This is her first experience working with a professional orchestra.

Nina says of Remnants, “When a resonant body is activated, the loudness and spectral content of the resulting sound change over time in complex interactions; this process can be described using the Attack Decay Sustain Release model (ADSR). Remnants explores this interaction of sound over time. The traditional orchestra is treated as a complex but integrated resonant body that can be excited in a variety of ways. This instigating sound then ripples through the ensemble in a causal chain, with each instrument reacting according to its inherent characteristics.”

About ACO
Now in its 36th season, 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

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 35 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), and the orchestra’s latest release, Orchestra Underground: X10D (June 2012), an album featuring unusual and extended solo instruments with the orchestra. 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, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Fromm Music Foundation and the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University. The project also receives public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts.

2012–13 Season Highlights

Friday, Oct. 26, 2012, at 7:30pm. Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall (57th St. & 7th Ave., NYC)

Orchestra Underground: Dreams & Dances
Jose Serebrier, Guest Conductor; Sharon Bezaly, flute; Milica Paranosic, gusle; Lori Cotler, vocals; David Chambers, libretto; Carmen Kordas, videos; Beowulf Sheehan, photos
JOSÉ SEREBRIER: Flute Concerto with Tango (US Premiere)
NARONG PRANGCHAROEN: The Migration of Lost Souls (World Premiere ACO/Underwood Commission)
CHARLES IVES: Symphony No. 3 (“Camp Meeting”)
MILICA PARANOSIC: The Tiger’s Wife: Prologue for Orchestra, Voice, Electronics and Visuals (Based on the novel The Tiger’s Wife by Téa Obreht) (World Premiere, ACO/LVMH Commission)

Friday, January 18, 2013, at 7:30pm. Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall (57th St. & 7th Ave., NYC)

Orchestra Underground: A Time & Place
George Manahan, Music Director & Conductor; Kate Soper, soprano; Jennifer Zetlan, soprano; Jorie Graham, poetry
LUKAS FOSS: Time Cycle
KYLE BLAHA: Sinfonietta (World Premiere, ACO/Jerome Foundation Commission)
ZHOU LONG: Bell Drum Tower (US Premiere)
KATE SOPER: “now is forever” he whispered: Orpheus and Eurydice for Voice & Orchestra (World Premiere, ACO Commission)

Friday, April 5, 2013, at 7:30pm. Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall (57th St. & 7th Ave., NYC)

Orchestra Underground: coLABoratory: Playing It UNSafe
ACO’s next musical laboratory. George Manahan, Music Director & Conductor
RAYMOND J. LUSTIG: Latency Canons
DAN VISCONTI: Glitchscape
DU YUN: Slow Portraits
JUDITH SAINTE CROIX: Vision V
TROY HERION: New York City Symphony

Laboratory Workshops:
March 5, 2013 at 10am. Flushing Town Hall (137-35 Northern Blvd., Flushing, NY).
April 2, 2013 at 2pm. The DiMenna Center (450 W 37th St., NYC).

Monday, April 8 at 10am & Tuesday, April 9 at 7:30pm. The DiMenna Center (450 W 37th St., NYC).

Underwood New Music Readings
ACO’s annual roundup of the country’s brightest young and emerging composers. George Manahan, Music Director & Conductor.
JONATHAN BLUMHOFER: Diversions
LOUIS CHIAPPETTA: Chroma
JOSHUA GROFFMAN: music from elsewhere
SAAD HADDAD: Maelstrom
ARTHUR J. MCCAFFREY: Thank You for Waiting
NINA YOUNG: Remnants

Monday, June 3 at 10am & Tuesday, June 4 at 7:30pm. Columbia University’s Miller Theatre (2960 Broadway, NYC).

Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute Readings
New works by jazz composers selected from the Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute. Gil Rose, Conductor
JENNIFER BELLOR: Crystal Skies
JOSE BEVIA: Noit-Allimissa
COURTNEY BRYAN: Shedding Skin
INGRID LAUBROCK: Vogelfrei
ANDY MILNE: Element of Surprise
RICHARD SUSSMAN: Explorations For Orchestra
SUMI TONOOKA: Full Circle