American Composers Orchestra Announces
21st Annual Underwood New Music Readings
Friday, June 1 at 10am (working rehearsal)
Saturday, June 2 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.
June 1 Working Rehearsal reservations: www.underwood2012rehearsal.eventbrite.com
June 2 Run-Through reservations: www.underwood2012runthrough.eventbrite.com

High-resolution photos: www.christinajensenpr.com (in ACO’s gallery)

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra’s (ACO) 21st Annual Underwood New Music Readings will take place from Friday, June 1 to Saturday, June 2, 2012 at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music (450 W. 37th St., NYC). The Readings include two public events – a working rehearsal on Friday at 10am, and a run-through on Saturday 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 over 20 years, 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 250 submissions received from around the country. The selected composers* – Ryan Chase, Peter Fahey, Michael-Thomas Foumai, Paul Kerekes, Pin Hsin Lin, and Benjamin Taylor – 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 2013-2014 season. ACO’s 2011 winner, Narong Prangcharoen, won the top prize with his work *Pubbanimitta*. His newly commissioned work, *The Migration of Lost Souls*, will be premiered by ACO at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall on October 26, 2012.

Audience members at the Readings will also have a chance to make their voices heard through the Audience Choice Award. On both June 1 and 2, 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 21st Annual Underwood New Music Readings are under the direction of ACO’s Artistic Director, composer Robert Beaser, and will be led by ACO Music Director George Manahan, with ACO Creative Advisor Derek Bermel and mentor composers Melinda Wagner and Steven Stucky. 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 Saturday 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, Creating Your Personal Brand, and Publicity and Promotion. The cost for the Seminar is $25, which includes lunch. Reservations can be made at [www.underwood2012workshop.eventbrite.com](http://www.underwood2012workshop.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.

*For more information about this year’s selected composers, please see their biographies following this press release.*

**About ACO**

Now in 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
American Composers Orchestra: Underwood New Music Readings; June 1 & 2, 2012

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 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, 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 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. ACO’s latest release, Emerging Composers Series Vol. 1, features world premiere live recordings of music by five up-and-coming composers. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

2012 Underwood New Music Readings Composers & Their Works

Ryan Chase: The Light Fantastic

For more information: www.ryanmchase.com

Ryan Chase has had music performed by ensembles such as Alaria, CIRCE, Contemporaneous, Indiana University’s New Music Ensemble, Mannes Orchestra, Chelsea Symphony, Mexico City Woodwind Quintet, 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. As a multimedia collaborator, Chase has worked with directors, dancers, and visual artists. He recently completed the score for director Maria Dirolf's short film *The Harbinger*. This season features the world premiere of a concert-length ballet, *The Pattern of the Heavens*, commissioned and produced by choreographer Lauren Weber Frederick. Chase is currently pursuing a Doctorate at Indiana University.

Claude Baker, one of Chase’s teachers, calls him, “quietly brilliant.” Baker says, “On the surface, Ryan is unprepossessing. Yet the music he writes belies this outward appearance, for it is often powerful, primal and viscerally charged. Each piece is carefully conceived, expertly crafted and wholly convincing.”

Of his work *The Light Fantastic*, Chase says, “*The Light Fantastic* is a virtuosic whirlwind for the orchestra, exploring the ensemble’s capacity for contrasts ranging from the visceral and bombastic to the intimate and ethereal. At the heart of this short ‘concertino for orchestra’ are two major motivic ideas: a short melody that is introduced by the piccolo at the very beginning and a repeated-note fanfare at the first major climax of the piece. These two motives are developed, tossed around the ensemble, hidden, found again, chopped up, hastily glued back together, pitted against each other, and finally brought together to drive the piece to its inevitable, thunderous conclusion.”

**Peter Fahey: Impressions**  
*For more information: [www.myspace.com/peterfaheycomposer](http://www.myspace.com/peterfaheycomposer)*

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. The judges call his music “very clear,” and “highly involved.” 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 he is an exchange scholar at Columbia University. Current projects include new works for the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble and the Momenta Quartet. This is his first experience with a professional orchestra.

Fahey says, “I began writing *Impressions* with a handful of self-consciously simple ideas in mind. I was thinking about how so many of the composers I admire can take what is basically a very simple idea, an idea that can seem almost naïve to begin with, put it through their compositional mill, and end up with surprisingly complex results. This was a process I wanted to somehow try and replicate in my own music. I wanted to move towards complexity but not complicatedness, and, above all, I wanted results that were very musical.”

**Michael-Thomas Foumai: Concerto for Orchestra**  
*For more information: [www.michaelfoumai.com](http://www.michaelfoumai.com)*

Native Hawaiian Michael-Thomas Foumai 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*). Bright Sheng, one of Foumai’s composition teachers, says, “During the period we worked together, Michael-Thomas never stopped surprising me with good quality compositions.”
Foumai was recently awarded the 2012 Jacob Druckman Prize from the Aspen Music Festival and School. He was a participant in the 2011 EarShot New Music Readings, during which his piece *The Light Bringer* symphony (inspired by the biblical story of the fall of Lucifer) was read by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Foumai's music has been performed by the New England Philharmonic, Honolulu Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Alarm Will Sound, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, June in Buffalo Festival, Aspen Music Festival, and the Calarts Theatre (REDCAT) at Disney Hall (Los Angeles). Foumai is currently a doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan. His composition teachers have been Bright Sheng, Michael Daugherty, Syd Hodkinson, and Peter Askim. His music has been recognized grants and honors from BMI, the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

*Concerto for Orchestra* is based on the five entities of the human soul, according to the ancient Egyptians – the Ren (name), Ba (soul), Sheut (Shadow), Ib (Heart), and Ka (Spirit). Foumai explains, “I have tried to translate the five parts of the human soul into the basic elements that create a piece of music. From birth, these musical elements are introduced, developed, reintroduced and by the end or death, only the essence remains, the soul.”

**Paul Kerekes: timber**

*For more information: www.paulkerekes.com*

Paul Kerekes’ music is described as “striking…ecstatic…dramatic” (*WQXR*) and “highly eloquent” (*New Haven Advocate*), 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. Prior to this experience he attended such notable programs as Yale’s New Music Workshop, California Summer Music, the Young Artists Piano Program at Tanglewood and Stony Brook Summer Music Festival. Kerekes is currently completing a masters degree at Yale School of Music under the instruction of Martin Bresnick. This is Kerekes’ first performance with a professional orchestra. Composer Christopher Theofanidis praises Kerekes’ work, saying, “All of his music is very finely crafted and considered, and it shows an excellent ear and sense of pacing.”

Of his work *timber*, Kerekes says, “*timber* is a macabre and hallucinatory look into the forest. The piece begins with a mysterious and dark harmonic palette which represents dawn and awakening. The harmonies brighten, as more daylight is revealed, and lead into a new section marked by falling chords. The chords fall like trees, more intricately after the other leading into a slow build of string pizzicatos surging upward.”

**Pin Hsin Lin: Symphony No. 3**

*For more information: www.composerpinhsin.blogspot.com*

Pin Hsin Lin strives to tell stories through her music. She 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. Browning comments, “Pin Hsin has attempted to incorporate her Taiwanese heritage using Western techniques to form an interesting approach to music composition.”
Lin’s awards include two Peabody Career Development Grants, two American Music Center’s Composer Assistance Grants, and scholarships from Bowdoin and St. Magnus. 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. Lin’s music is often collaborative in nature – she has worked with partners ranging from dancers to computer scientists. This is Lin’s first experience with a professional orchestra.

“Symphony No. 3 was written in memory of my father, who passed away two years ago,” says Lin. “It is a one-movement work that includes three primary melodic structural elements, which together symbolize my complex feelings about missing my father. The intensely dramatic middle sections depict the time that I and other family members flew back to Taiwan to be with him during his treatment. This process was a precious journey for my family, during which we encountered sadness and depression. In the middle sections, I also added new pitch material inspired by the Taiwanese folksong, Gao Shan Qing (or The Green, High Mountain). Finally, the music of the last section turns to a more peaceful mood, in which I depict my family’s gratitude for the time we spent together.”

**Benjamin Taylor: Leaving White**

*For more information: www.benjamintaylormusic.com*

Benjamin Taylor writes music for a variety of chamber ensembles, jazz combos and big bands, wind bands, choirs, and experimental ensembles. A large part of Taylor’s music includes electroacoustics. Donald Freund, one of Taylor’s teachers, remarks, “Benjamin understands how to create engaging ideas and develop them to their fullest potential. He has a firm command of orchestration, and a sure sense of instrumental color.”

Taylor’s music has been performed at the Society of Electroacoustic Music in the United States National Conference, Spark Festival of Electronic Music and Arts, Society of Composers National Conference, Noisefloor Festival, Electronic Music Midwest, Electroacoustic Barn Dance, New Music Hartford Four Seasons Concert Series, Gamma-UT New Music Festival and international jazz festivals in Edinburgh, Wigan, Marlborough and Birmingham. Taylor’s prizes and honors include a 2011 BMI Student Composers Award, a Barlow Endowment Commission, a 2011 ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award, First Place Winner of the 2008 SCI/ASCAP Student Composition Competition (Region VII), First Place Co-winner of the 2008 International Society of Bassist’s Composition Competition (media division), and First Place in the 2009 Vera Hinckley Mayhew Creative Arts Composition Contest. Taylor recently started doctoral studies at Indiana University at Bloomington.

Taylor says of *Leaving White*, “The title, *Leaving White*, refers instead to my own experience writing this piece. As a composer, I have found inspiration for my music in a variety of places: photography, life experiences, traffic signs, the periodic table of elements, and even internet search engines. But with this piece my compositional process was much different. I consciously tried to remove all extra-musical associations from my mind in order to leave my mind blank; thus leaving white.”

# # #

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.


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