American Composers Orchestra
Orchestra Underground: American Accounts
March 22 at Zankel Hall

Featuring the world premiere of
Gabriel Kahane’s *Crane Palimpsest*
& the NY premiere of
Michael Daugherty’s *Trail of Tears*

Plus Milton Babbitt’s *From the Psalter*
for soprano and orchestra &
Aaron Copland’s *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*

George Manahan, Music Director & Conductor

Thursday, March 22, 2012 at 7:30pm
Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall | 57th & 7th Avenue | NYC

Tickets: $39-50 at www.carnegiehall.org,
212-247-7800, or the Carnegie Hall Box Office
(154 West 57th Street, NYC)

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra (ACO) presents Orchestra Underground: American Accounts on Thursday, March 22, 2012 at 7:30pm at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall. The concert, led by ACO Music Director & Conductor George Manahan, explores uniquely American stories – both in musical content and in the background of the composers – and features works by Aaron Copland, Milton Babbitt, Gabriel Kahane, and Michael Daugherty. (The premiere of Ian Williams’ new piece, previously announced as being part of this concert, has been postponed.)

American Accounts features the world premiere of a new work commissioned by ACO from Brooklyn-based composer/singer/songwriter Gabriel Kahane – his *Crane Palimpsest* is a meditation on the Brooklyn Bridge that takes as its starting point the words of Hart Crane and features the composer as both singer, guitarist, and pianist. The concert also includes the New York premiere of Michael Daugherty’s *Trail of Tears*, an ACO co-commission which chronicles the tragic internment and march of native Americans to
reservations in Oklahoma, with Amy Porter as the flute soloist. Milton Babbitt’s From the Psalter, commissioned by ACO in 2002, and reprised on this program in memory of the composer’s passing last year, features soprano Judith Bettina. Aaron Copland’s jazz-fueled 1950 Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, with ACO’s Creative Advisor Derek Bermel as the clarinet soloist, completes the program.

Founded in 1977, American Composers Orchestra remains the only orchestra in the world dedicated exclusively to the creation, performance, preservation, and promulgation of music by American composers. To date, ACO has performed music by more than 600 American composers, including 200 world premieres and newly commissioned works. Orchestra Underground is ACO’s subversive and entrepreneurial exploration of the orchestra as an elastic ensemble that can respond to composers’ unhindered creativity in experimental and innovative ways. The ensemble has embraced new technology, eclectic instruments and influences, spatial orientation, new experiments in concert format, and multimedia and multi-disciplinary collaborations. Since the opening of Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall’s subterranean state-of-the-art auditorium, Orchestra Underground has played to sold-out audiences, with 50 world premieres and newly commissioned works.

**Gabriel Kahane: Crane Palimpsest**
*(World Premiere, ACO/Jerome/NYSCA commission). For more information and audio: www.gabrielkahane.com*

Composer and performer Gabriel Kahane is a musical polymath, invested equally in the worlds of concert, theater and popular music. Launched by his 2006 song cycle Craigslistlieder – heard frequently in august concert halls and dirty bars alike – Kahane's rapid ascent as a composer of concert works came into focus in the 2010-2011 season, which witnessed the premieres of three commissioned works: The Red Book, a string quartet for the Kronos Quartet; a hybrid cello sonata/song cycle for cellist Alisa Weilerstein and himself; and a large chamber work for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

As a performer, Kahane moves with ease between musical realms. His self-titled debut album, featuring performances by Sam Amidon, Sufjan Stevens and Chris Thile, was released in 2008 and was followed up by a second LP in the fall of 2010. Among his various credits as a performer, he has appeared with Rufus Wainwright on Elvis Costello’s Spectacle, sung lieder with pianists Jonathan Biss and Jeremy Denk, and has, as a pianist, joined bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff in recital throughout Europe.

*Crane Palimpsest* is a meditation on the Brooklyn Bridge, juxtaposing settings of stanzas from Hart Crane’s poem, To Brooklyn Bridge, with songs set to Kahane’s own lyrics in response to the Crane text. Kahane explains, “I've literalized the idea of ‘the bridge’ in the sense that two distinct musical vocabularies are in play and cross paths; the first being the more formal language heard in the introduction and first several stanzas of the Crane, the second being the vernacular or pop-based harmonic language in the songs with my own words.”
**Michael Daugherty: Trail of Tears**
*(New York Premiere, ACO co-commission). For more information and audio: www.michaeldaugherty.net*

Michael Daugherty is one of the most commissioned, performed, and recorded composers on the American concert music scene today. With music rich with cultural allusions and bearing the stamp of classic modernism, Daugherty has been hailed by The Times (London) as “a master icon maker” with a “maverick imagination, fearless structural sense and meticulous ear.” Daugherty first came to international attention when the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra performed his Metropolis Symphony at Carnegie Hall in 1994. In 2011, the Nashville Symphony’s Naxos recording of Daugherty’s Metropolis Symphony and Deus ex Machina was honored with three Grammy Awards, including Best Classical Contemporary Composition.

Daugherty has received numerous awards, distinctions, and fellowships for his music, including: a Fulbright Fellowship, the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, and the Goddard Lieberson Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His recordings can be heard on Albany, Argo, Delos, Equilibrium, Klavier, Naxos and Nonesuch labels.

Of his flute concerto *Trail of Tears*, Daugherty says, “One of the tragedies of human history is the forced removal of peoples from their homeland for political, economic, racial, religious, or cultural reasons. In America, the forced removal of all Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River began with the passage of President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830. In 1838, 15,000 Cherokee men, women, and children were forcibly taken from their homes by the U.S. Army and placed in stockades and camps in Tennessee. From November 1838 to March 1839, the Cherokee, with scant clothing and many without shoes, were forced to make an 800-mile march for relocation in Oklahoma during the bitter cold of winter. Suffering from exposure, disease, and starvation, nearly 4,000 Cherokee died during the five-month march known as the ‘Trail of Tears.’ My flute concerto is a musical journey into how the human spirit discovers ways to deal with upheaval, adversity and adapting to a new environment.”

**Amy Porter, flute**

Amy Porter first leapt to international attention winning the Kobe International Flute Competition in Japan, which led to invitations to perform throughout the world. She is a touring concert artist who performs recitals in the major concert halls of Asia and the United States. Porter has been heard in recital on National Public Radio, highlighted on PBS Live From Lincoln Center and featured on the magazine covers of *Flute Talk Magazine* in the USA, *The Flute Magazine* in Japan and *Muramatsu Flute Magazine* in Japan. Porter has four world premieres written for her – *The Shadow Of Sirius Concerto* by Joel Puckett, David Sampson’s *Undercurrents* for solo flute, Christopher Caliendo’s Sonata No. 8 *The Ghost Sonata* for flute and piano, as well as Michael Daugherty's *Trail of Tears*.

**Milton Babbitt: From the Psalter**
*(ACO commission)*

The compositional and intellectual wisdom of Milton Babbitt has influenced a wide range of contemporary musicians. A broad array of distinguished musical achievements in the dodecaphonic system and important writings on the subject have generated increased understanding and integration of serialist language into the eclectic musical styles of today. Babbitt was also renowned for his great talent and instinct for jazz

and his astonishing command of American popular music. An extensive catalogue of works for multiple combinations of instruments and voice along with his pioneering achievements in synthesized sound made Babbitt one of the most celebrated contemporary composers. He was a founder and member of the Committee of Direction for the Electronic Music Center of Columbia-Princeton Universities and a member of the Editorial Board of Perspectives of New Music. Milton Babbitt was the recipient of numerous honors, commissions, and awards, including a Mac Arthur Fellowship and a Pulitzer Prize Citation for his "life's work as a distinguished and seminal American composers." Babbitt was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Babbitt's From the Psalter for soprano and orchestra joins Psalm 13 with two stanzas each from Psalms 40 and 41, as realized in verse by Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586). Babbitt wrote of the piece, “The syntax of the poetry may sometimes appear intricate, even convoluted; an occasional word is ‘archaic’ (at least, for most of us), and familiar words occasionally are employed unfamiliarly, but the verses of this remarkable poet, essayist, and courtier are never ultimately obscure, but elegant, original, and even memorable.”

Judith Bettina, soprano

Soprano Judith Bettina, hailed for her proficiency in a wide range of musical styles, has appeared as guest soloist with such orchestras as the Houston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Munich Philharmonic. She has appeared with chamber groups throughout the United States and Europe, including appearances with the Bach Chamber Soloists, The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Continuum, Bard Music Festival, New York Philmusica, Parnassus, Speculum Musicae, The Geneva Music Festival, Ensemble 21, Boston Musica Viva, San Francisco Contemporary Chamber players, the Monadnock Music Festival, and the Library of Congress. Highly acclaimed for her performances of contemporary music, Bettina has had works written for her by Mel Powell, Tobias Picker, Christopher Berg, Chester Biscardi, David Rakowski, Richard Karpen, and David Olan. She has premiered works by Charles Wuorinen, Milton Babbitt, Lori Dobbins, Richard Danielpour, George Tsontakis, and Vivian Fine. Bettina's recent performances have included Tobias Picker's Symphony No. 2: Aussöhnung and the premiere of Trest sonetos de amor, Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, and Edison Denisov's La vie en rouge. Bettina premiered From the Psalter with ACO in 2002.

Aaron Copland: Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra

Aaron Copland's name is synonymous with American music. It was his pioneering achievement to break free from Europe and create concert music that is characteristically American. In addition to writing such well-loved works as Fanfare for the Common Man, Rodeo, and Appalachian Spring, Copland conducted, organized concerts, wrote books on music, and served as an American cultural ambassador to the world. While studying with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, Copland became interested in incorporating popular styles into his music. Upon his return to the U.S. he advanced the cause of new music through lectures and writings, and organized the famed Copland-Sessions concerts.

Aaron Copland was one of the most honored cultural figures in the history of the United States. The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Kennedy Center Award, the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences "Oscar", and the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany
were only a few of the honors and awards he received. In 1982, The Aaron Copland School of Music was established in his honor at Queens College of the City University of New York.

Copland’s Concer to for Clarinet and Orchestra was premiered in November 1950, in a radio broadcast by Benny Goodman and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Reiner. Two weeks later, clarinetist Ralph Mc Alpine gave the piece its public premiere with the Philadelphia Orchestra. The following year, choreographer Jerome Robbins set his ballet The Pied Piper to the concerto, which helped the piece gain critical and audience acclaim. Copland’s work from this period has been described as “…a remarkable body of work, in a style which came as close as any to blending popular and serious in a productively intimate synthesis.” The Concerto, with its heavy jazz influence, is such a blend.

**Derek Bermel, clarinet**

Described by the *Toronto Star* as “an eclectic with wide open ears” and by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as “one of America’s finest young composers,” composer and clarinetist Derek Bermel has been widely hailed for his creativity, theatricality, and virtuosity. Bermel’s works draw from a rich variety of musical genres, including classical, jazz, pop, rock, blues, folk, and gospel. Hands-on experience with music of cultures around the world has become part of the fabric and force of his compositional language. Currently ACO’s Creative Advisor, Bermel served as Music Alive Composer-in-Residence with ACO from 2006-2009. Bermel has received commissions from major orchestras and chamber ensembles throughout the US and overseas, collaborating with a diverse array of artists as Wynton Marsalis, Midori, John Adams, Paquito D’Rivera, Philip Glass, Gustavo Dudamel and Stephen Sondheim. He is currently composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and artist-in-residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His clarinet concerto, *Voices*, commissioned and premiered by ACO and recorded by the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, was hailed as “magnificent’ by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Bermel’s music is published by Peermusic (North/South American and Asia) and Faber Music (Europe and Australia).

**About George Manahan**

In his second season as Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra, George Manahan’s esteemed career embraces everything from opera to concert, the traditional to the contemporary. He served as Music Director of the New York City Opera for fourteen seasons, where he evoked “from his players the kind of heartfelt involvement unthinkable in the City Opera orchestra pit 20 years ago…” (*New York Times*). As Director of Orchestral Studies at the Manhattan School of Music and guest conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music, Manahan continues the tradition of mentoring young musicians.

During his time at New York City Opera, Manahan helped envision the organization’s groundbreaking VOX program, a series of workshops and readings that 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, through VOX Manahan has introduced works by composers on the rise including Adam Silverman, Elodie Lauten, Mason Bates, and David T. Little.

George Manahan’s wide-ranging 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*. His enthusiasm for contemporary music continues today; he has conducted numerous world premieres, including 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*. As music director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for twelve years, he was honored four times by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his commitment to 20th century music.

**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 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, and Buffalo Philharmonic. For more information visit [www.EarShotnetwork.org](http://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.

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


ACO programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs 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