American Composers Orchestra releases second
Digital Download Album
Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1

World Premiere Recordings by Kati Agócs,
Michael Gatonska, Fang Man,
Clint Needham, and Gregory Spears

Release date: February 14, 2012

Available from iTunes, Amazon.com
& other major retailers

Press Preview available – contact Christina Jensen
for link to online album.

For more information: www.americancomposers.org

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra (ACO) announces the February 14 release of its second digital download album, Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1. Following the March 2011 release of the orchestra’s inaugural digital album (Playing It UnSafe), this new album features world premiere recordings of music by rising-star composers performed between 2006 and 2009 as part of Orchestra Underground, ACO’s cutting-edge orchestral series at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall. By making available never-before-recorded orchestral music, ACO goes beyond the concert hall, reaching new listeners and gaining greater exposure and visibility for the young composers it showcases in this series. ACO will release two additional digital albums this spring – an album of new works for extended instruments with the orchestra, and an album of multimedia works.

Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1 includes music by Kati Agócs, Michael Gatonska, Fang Man, Clint Needham, and Gregory Spears. Gregory Spears’s Finishing was first developed as part of ACO’s Readings and Lab at University of Pennsylvania in 2007 – a sublime work that uses dog whistles (which are audible) and tape recorders within the orchestra. Kati Agócs deftly strings together a series of exquisite, intimate sonorities in her ACO-commissioned Pearls. Clint Needham’s Chamber Symphony explores themes of personal and universal transformation; the composition was the result of his winning ACO’s prestigious Underwood commission. Fang Man, also an alumna of the Underwood program, combines clarinet soloist (ACO’s own Creative Advisor, virtuoso clarinetist Derek Bermel) and electronic techniques
American Composers Orchestra Announces Second Digital Album

(performed by the composer and Alexis Baskind) with melodies from Chinese opera in Resurrection. Michael Gatonska, another Underwood commissionee, uses the ever-shifting configurations of birds in flight as the organizing principal behind his After the Wings of Migratory Birds, creating music that migrates through space with dynamic energy. Four of the five works on this album are ACO commissions.

Creating opportunities for emerging composers is central to the mission of American Composers Orchestra, which seeks to be the leading research and development laboratory for American composers, orchestras and the wider cultural community. All too often it is the case that up-and-coming composers are excluded from professional orchestra programs, as better-known music is programmed. Yet, writing for orchestra remains one of the supreme challenges and rewards for most composers. The instrumental possibilities, the timbral nuances, the dynamic range, and the raw energy of dozens of talented instrumentalists unified in their musical execution is still, even in the 21st century, a singular and powerful sound experience. It is what has drawn these fine young composers to the orchestra, and it is the opportunity to see and hear what these composers might do with these possibilities that has drawn ACO to them.

For 20 consecutive years the orchestra has offered New Music Readings (first as the Whitaker New Music Readings, and now as the Underwood Readings) that have become one of this country’s most coveted opportunities for emerging composers. Readings give emerging composers the opportunity to work with an orchestra singular in its commitment to the development of the American composer, and to hear their work performed by some of the country’s most outstanding contemporary music instrumentalists. Composers also benefit from critical feedback and mentoring from conductor, players, and senior composers. ACO has brought its New Music Readings to composers around the country through touring and residency programs, and its national network, EarShot, that assists and advises other orchestras in mounting their own Readings. ACO commissions a lot of new music, well over 200 works to date, much of it from young composers – often their very first professional commission.

More Information
American Composers Orchestra: www.americancomposers.org
Kati Agócs: www.agocsmusic.com
Michael Gatonska: www.michaelgatonska.com
Fang Man: www.fangmanmusic.com
Clint Needham: www.clintneedham.com
Gregory Spears: www.gregoryspears.com

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; Improvisel, 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.

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. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.
Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1
All works performed by American Composers Orchestra
Link to online album available – Contact Christina Jensen

Pearls by Kati Agócs
1. Chorale I (01:21)
2. Peregrination (02:51)
3. Chorale II (02:13)
4. Peregrination II – Chorale – Postlude (05:39)
  George Manahan, conductor

5. After the Wings of Migratory Birds by Michael Gatonska (18:04)
  Brad Lubman, conductor

6. Resurrection by Fang Man (18:39)
  Derek Berman, clarinet
  Alexis Baskind and Fang Man, electronics
  George Manahan, conductor

Chamber Symphony by Clint Needham
7. I. Hammering Out (06:05)
8. II. Open-ended Echoes (08:53)
9. III. Radiant Nation (06:39)
  Jeffrey Milarsky, conductor

10. Finishing by Gregory Spears (14:01)
  Jeffrey Milarsky, conductor

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

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