American Composers Orchestra
Orchestra Underground: *Eastern Wind*

George Manahan, Music Director
Friday, April 1, 2016 at 7:30pm

Performances by
Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (Vocals & Ud)
Steven LaBrie (Baritone)

Featuring the
World Premiere of Saad Haddad’s *Manarah*

World Premiere of Reena Esmail’s *Avartan*
with video by Neeraj Jain

World Premiere of Mehmet Ali Sanlikol’s *Harabat – The Intoxicated*

Gity Razaz’s *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*

Matthias Pintscher’s *songs from Solomon’s garden*

Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall | 57th & 7th Ave. | NYC
Tickets: $43 & 50 at www.carnegiehall.org, 212-247-7800,
or the Carnegie Hall Box Office (154 West 57th Street, NYC)

For more information: www.americancomposers.org

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra (ACO) continues its 39th season with *Orchestra Underground: Eastern Wind* led by ACO Music Director George Manahan on Friday, April 1, 2016 at 7:30pm at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall. This concert, which includes three world premieres, features music by young composers inspired by Middle Eastern and Indian culture – Saad Haddad, a first generation Arab-American composer from Los Angeles; Reena Esmail, who is Indian-American; Turkish-American composer Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (who will also perform as a soloist with the orchestra on the ud); Iranian-American composer Gity Razaz; plus Matthias Pintscher’s *songs from Solomon’s garden* featuring baritone Steven LaBrie.
Saad Haddad’s *Manarah* (“beacon” in Arabic), commissioned by ACO, is scored for two digitally processed antiphonal trumpets and orchestra, and borrows from the performance practices of Arabic musicians, particularly Egyptian singer Oum Kalthoum. *Harabat – The Intoxicated* by Mehmet Ali Sanlikol was co-commissioned by ACO and Carnegie Hall, and features the composer singing and playing the ud. The piece is inspired by the classical Ottoman/Turkish music tradition and features a poem by a late 19th/early 20th century Sufi dervish. Reena Esmail’s *Avartan*, also commissioned by ACO, is inspired by the “avartan,” a rhythmic cycle featured in Hindustani music and is paired with video by Neeraj Jain. Gity Razaz’s *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* explores the internal/psychological stage of Narcissus’ metamorphosis and incorporates Razaz’ interest in the improvisational styles of sound artists Beth Custer and Kammerflimme Kollectief. Matthias Pintscher’s *songs from Solomon’s garden* is based around the Biblical *Song of Songs*, and draws on the Hebrew language for rhythmic patterns and gestures.

In addition to *Eastern Wind*, ACO’s 2015-2016 season has included the SONiC Festival, a 9-day festival held in October 2015 throughout New York City that featured more than 24 world premieres, seven U.S. premieres, and 22 New York premieres. This summer, the 25th Anniversary Underwood New Music Readings will be held on June 13-14, 2016 at Columbia University’s Miller Theatre, led by George Manahan. For over a generation, ACO’s New Music Readings have been providing all-important career development and public exposure to the country’s most promising emerging composers, with over 140 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. In addition, in 2016, ACO leads a third installment of the Jazz Composer Orchestra Institute, which was founded in 2010. Three orchestras – the Naples Philharmonic (May 25 & 26), American Composers Orchestra (June 15 & 16), and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra (September 20 & 21) – will workshop, rehearse, and give public readings of new works for symphony orchestra written by sixteen jazz composers, who were selected to participate following a weeklong Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute Intensive at UCLA in August 2015. With the class of 2016, nearly 100 jazz composers have benefited from the program, and so far 27 new jazz works for orchestra have been created and workshopped. ACO’s own JCOI Readings will take place on June 15 and 16, 2016 at Columbia University’s Miller Theatre.

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 700 American composers, including nearly 300 world premieres and newly commissioned works. ACO’s Orchestra Underground, named for Zankel Hall (its subterranean state-of-the-art home) as well as the series’ subversive nature, seeks to reinvent the orchestra with new works that challenge convention, with diverse influences, unusual instruments and influences, multimedia and multi-disciplinary collaborations.

**Saad Haddad: Manarah (World Premiere; ACO/Jerome Commission)**

For more information: [www.saadnhaddad.com](http://www.saadnhaddad.com)

Saad Haddad’s (b. 1992) works have been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Columbus Symphony, the Milwaukee Symphony, American Composers Orchestra, the Juilliard Orchestra and the USC Thornton Symphony. Recent accolades include two ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards, the Gena Raps Chamber Music Prize, the BMI Student Composer Award, and the Copland House Residency Award. He is
an alumnus of the American Composers Orchestra's Earshot and Underwood reading programs, with Manarah marking Haddad’s third work in four years in collaboration with ACO. Haddad focuses on creating compositions that incorporate Arabic musical tradition in a Western context, both in acoustic and electroacoustic mediums. As a first-generation Arab-American living in the twenty-first century, he is influenced by the disparate qualities inherent between Arab and American cultures. Haddad’s music delves into that relationship through the melding of traditional instruments and current advances in technology. He is currently in his last year at the Juilliard School, pursuing a Master of Music Composition with John Corigliano.

Manarah (“beacon” in Arabic) is scored for two digitally processed antiphonal trumpets and orchestra. The work features the orchestra’s two trumpet players in the left and right balconies, calling back and forth to one another and the rest of the ensemble. They serve as pillars nestled high above the ground, inviting the orchestra to join them, like lighthouses beckoning ships safely to their shores. Both trumpet players are processed live through a software patch created through MAX, which is triggered live onstage through a laptop. Haddad says, “In Manarah, I explore microtonal intervallic relationships, glissandi, and unconventional changes in vibrato that are heard extensively in the traditional performance practice of Arabic musicians, most notably the Egyptian singer, Oum Kalthoum. With this work, I hope to showcase the rich musical culture of my Middle-Eastern heritage through the lens of my upbringing here in the United States. The piece is dedicated to my godfather, Marwan Haddad, whose initials comprise the first and last letters of the title.”

Reena Esmail: Avartan (World Premiere; ACO Commission)
For more information: www.reeanaesmail.com

Indian-American composer Reena Esmail (b. 1983) enjoys working in both the Western and Hindustani (North Indian) classical music idioms. Esmail holds a bachelor's degree in composition from The Juilliard School, and a master’s degree from the Yale School of Music. Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis and Martin Bresnick, Christopher Rouse and Samuel Adler. She has won numerous awards, including the Walter Hinrichsen Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (with forthcoming publication of a work by C.F. Peters) and two ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards. She is currently a Post-Residential doctoral candidate at the Yale School of Music. Esmail was a recipient of a Fulbright-Nehru grant for the 2011-2012 year and studied Hindustani vocal music in New Delhi, India. She was selected as a 2011 INK Fellow (in association with TED). Esmail’s doctoral thesis, entitled Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers. Her most recent Hindustani vocal studies have been with Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Saili Kalyanpur in Los Angeles, CA. Reena Esmail has received commissions from Albany Symphony, Kronos Quartet, American Composers Orchestra, Imani Winds, Yale’s Institute of Sacred Music, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and River Oaks Chamber Orchestra. She is currently the Composer in Residence with Pasadena Master Chorale, Concerts on the Slope, and Street Symphony. Esmail currently lives in Los Angeles, California.

Of her new piece for ACO, Esmail says, “In Hindustani music, an ‘avartan’ is a rhythmic cycle. Each avartan returns to its point of origin, while simultaneously moving the music forward into new territory. This music, and the film that accompanies it by Neeraj Jain, explores a single avartan or cycle in the context of cultural
perception. It is about first impressions. Who is the person in each successive portrait? What might their story be? And how much of that first impression is actually true?

Mehmet Ali Sanlikol: **Harabat – The Intoxicated (World Premiere; ACO/Carnegie Hall Commission)**

**For more information:** [www.sanlikol.com](http://www.sanlikol.com)

Grammy nominated composer, JAZZIZ’s Top 10 Critics’ Choice 2014 pick, pianist and classical Turkish music singer Mehmet Ali Sanlikol (b. 1974) has been praised by critics all over the world for his unique, pluralist, multicultural and energetic musical voice. Originally from Cyprus and Turkey, Sanlikol is a multi-instrumentalist, ethnomusicologist, Harvard research fellow, and a faculty member of Emerson College and Holy Cross. The Boston Globe noted that Sanlikol’s “music is colorful, fanciful, full of rhythmic life, and full of feeling. The multiculturalism is not touristy, but rather sophisticated, informed, internalized; Sanlikol is a citizen of the world”, “…and he is another who could play decisive role in music’s future in the world.” A musical polymath, Mehmet Sanlikol has composed for and performed with international stars and ensembles such as Bob Brookmeyer, Anat Cohen, Dave Liebman, Esperanza Spalding, Tiger Okoshi, Antonio Sanchez, The Boston Camerata, A Far Cry string orchestra, Boston Cello Quartet, and Erkan Öğur.

Mehmet Ali Sanlikol’s new piece for ACO, *Harabat – The Intoxicated*, is inspired by the classical Ottoman/Turkish music tradition with complex rhythmic cycles (usul), and will feature a poem by a late 19th/early 20th century Sufi dervish, Edib Harabi. Sanlikol says, “I kept a pluralist approach in this composition by reflecting on my own cosmopolitan modernity through Ottoman/Turkish melodic lines, at times infused by jazz, featured in the ud and the voice that are layered on top of the orchestra. In order to truly compose a musically multilingual piece for the orchestra I ended up using several techniques including one I developed for the trumpet where I make use of extended tubes and false fingerings in order to achieve microtonal accuracy required by the Ottoman/Turkish modal (makam) tradition. The layered ostinati that accompany the vocal improvisation in the piece is modeled after the singing of repeated rhythmic phrases by Sufi dervishes during improvised chanting.”

Gity Razaz: **The Metamorphosis of Narcissus**

**For more information:** [www.gityrazaz.com](http://www.gityrazaz.com)

Gity Razaz’s (b. 1986) music ranges from concert solo pieces to large symphonic works. Razaz is an active collaborator involved in projects across disciplines from modern dance to electro-acoustic sonic landscapes with music commissioned and performed by Moirae Ensemble, Vision Into Art, Metropolis Ensemble, National Ballet School of Canada, New York Choreographic Institute, and Sirius String Quartet, among others. Razaz’s numerous national and international awards include the 2013 Jerome Foundation award, the Libby Larsen Prize in the New Music Competition, Juilliard Composers’ Orchestra Competition, three ASCAP awards, Juilliard’s Palmer Dixon Award for the outstanding composition of the year in 2010 and 2012, and recognition from the Brian Israel Composition Prize, Margaret Blackburn Memorial Competition, and the League of Composers. In addition to writing music, Razaz devotes time to teaching piano, composition, and theory both privately and at New Jersey’s Ramapo College, as well as leading master classes nationally. Gity Razaz attended The Juilliard School, earning a BA and MA in composition.
Razaz's piece *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* is structured as a triplex musical soundscape with each section exploring an internal/psychological stage of Narcissus' metamorphosis. Themes from the first section return as fragments in expanded form, giving an overall sense of perpetual development. Aside from classical music, Razaz has recently taken interest in experimental and improvisational style of sound artists like Beth Custer and Kammerflimmer Kollectief, whose music conveys a general sense of eternal progression.

**Matthais Pintscher: songs from Solomon’s garden**

*For more information: [www.matthiaspintscher.com](http://www.matthiaspintscher.com)*

**Matthias Pintscher** (b. 1971) was born in Marl in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, and studied composition with Giselher Klebe and Manfred Trojahn. Formative influences were his encounters with Hans Werner Henze, who invited him to Montepulciano in 1991 and 1992, and with Helmut Lachenmann, Pierre Boulez and Peter Eötvös. Awards include first prize in the Hitzacker Composition Competition (1992), the Rolf Liebermann Prize and the Opera Prize from the Körber Foundation Hamburg (1993 and 1996), the Prince Pierre de Monaco Prize (1999), Composition Prize from the Salzburg Easter Festival and the Hindemith Prize from the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival (2000). In 2002 he was awarded the Hans Werner Henze Prize (Westphalian Music Prize). Pintscher first came to international attention with the opera *Thomas Chatterton* at the Semperopera in Dresden (1998), and later with his second opera *L’espace dernier* at the Opéra National de Paris (2004). He was composer-in-residence with the Cleveland Orchestra in 2002, the following seasons at the Konzerthaus Dortmund, Lucerne Festival, with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Saarbrücken, at the Philharmonie, Cologne and at the RSO Stuttgart. Pintscher is Artist-in-Association at the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra since 2010 and Artist-in-residence at the Danish Radio Orchestra since 2014. As a conductor, he works regularly with leading orchestras and ensembles in Europe and the U.S. From 2007-2009 he was Professor of Composition at the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich and 2010-2011 at the New York University. He was appointed Music Director of Ensemble intercontemporain in the 2013-2014 season and has been a Professor of Composition at The Juilliard School since September 2014.

Of *songs of Solomon’s garden*, Matthias Pintscher says, “In its beauty, mysteriousness and ambiguity, scarcely any other work of literature in western culture has held such an unbroken fascination for over two thousand years – genuine love poetry for the metaphor, rich in imagery, of God’s relationship to his chosen people than the shir ha shirim, the Song of Songs. A multi-faceted song to love itself, its high tone seems to be acquainted with all the depths of passion in an entirely worldly way.” In Pintscher’s composition, the Hebrew language provides rhythmic and gestural patterns. The New York Philharmonic under the direction of Alan Gilbert gave the world premiere of *songs from Solomon’s garden* in April 2010 with baritone Thomas Hampson.

**Steven LaBrie, baritone**

*For more information: [www.stevenlabrie.com](http://www.stevenlabrie.com)*

Baritone **Steven LaBrie**, a native of Dallas, Texas, is a recent graduate of The Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) in Philadelphia, PA and is beginning to attract attention for his beautiful timbre, expressive singing and dramatic presence. In the 2015-2016 season, Labrie will be making his debut at Lyric Opera Baltimore heading the cast, as Figaro, in their production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. He will also be featured with soprano Erin
Neeraj Jain, filmmaker
For more information: www.neeraj-jain.com

Neeraj Jain is a filmmaker based out of both Los Angeles and New York. During his time at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, he spent the majority of his time working on his craft as a cinematographer with occasional plunges into the world of directing. He hopes that his work as a cinematographer will take him around the world on various projects. In his free time, you’ll often find him traveling, taking photographs, and trying his hand at cooking.

About George Manahan, ACO Music Director

In his fifth season as Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra, the wide-ranging and versatile George Manahan has had an esteemed career embracing everything from opera to the concert stage, the traditional to the contemporary. In addition to his work with ACO, Manahan continues his commitment to working with young musicians as Director of Orchestral Studies at the Manhattan School of Music as well as guest conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music. He also serves as Music Director of the Portland Opera.

Manahan was Music Director at New York City Opera for fourteen seasons. There he helped envision the organization’s groundbreaking VOX program, a series of workshops and readings that have 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, Manahan has introduced works by composers on the rise including Adam Silverman, Elodie Lauten, Mason Bates, and David T. Little. Among his many world premieres are 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.

In May 2011 Manahan was honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his “career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time that has enriched and enabled Concert Music both at home and abroad.” His recent Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber’s Antony and Cleopatra was hailed by audiences and critics alike. The New York Times reported, “the fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have encountered.” In 2013, Manahan was awarded the Alice M. Ditson Award for his outstanding commitment to the work of emerging composers.
George Manahan’s 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*. 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**

Founded in 1977, 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 700 American composers, including nearly 300 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; coLABoratory: 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 and upcoming Earshot programs have included the Detroit, Berkeley, La Jolla, Nashville, Memphis, Colorado, San Diego Symphonies, the New York Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony, and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. For more information visit [www.EarShotnetwork.org](http://www.EarShotnetwork.org). The Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, launched in 2010, supports jazz artists who desire to write for the symphony.

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 36 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

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

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ACO is a member of the League of American Orchestras and EarShot, the National Orchestral Composition Discovery Network.