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American Composers Orchestra Continues 40th Anniversary Season with ACO Parables at Symphony Space

Tuesday, May 23, 2017 at 8pm
with Rossen Milanov, Guest Conductor

Featuring the World Premiere of
Carlos Simon’s Portrait of a Queen
with Rehanna Thelwell, narrator

PLUS John Corigliano’s Troubadours
with guitar soloist Sharon Isbin
and premieres by Nina C. Young and Bright Sheng

Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space | 2537 Broadway at 95th Street, NYC
Tickets: $30-$40 at 212.864.5400 or www.symphonyspace.org

American Composers Orchestra: www.americancomposers.org

New York, NY—American Composers Orchestra (ACO), under the leadership of Artistic Director Derek Bermel and Music Director George Manahan, continues its 40th Anniversary Season on Tuesday, May 23, 2017 at 8pm with ACO Parables at Symphony Space’s Peter Jay Sharp Theatre. The concert inaugurates a new partnership between American Composers Orchestra and Symphony Space, and is part of Symphony Space’s FUSE Project. ACO Parables, led by guest conductor Rossen Milanov, explores music’s incredible ability to tell stories and weave tales.

The concert will feature the world premiere of ACO’s 2016 Underwood New Music Readings commission winner Carlos Simon’s Portrait of a Queen with narrator Rehanna Thelwell, which traces the evolution of African-Americans in America from the female perspective. The program also includes John Corigliano’s Troubadours: Variations for Guitar and Orchestra featuring star guitarist Sharon Isbin, for whom the piece was written; plus the world premiere of Nina C. Young’s Out of whose womb came the ice featuring baritone David Tinervia with video by R. Luke DuBois, which tells the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton’s Antarctic expedition of 1914-17; and the New York premiere of Bright Sheng’s Postcards, a work that explores the folk music of different regions of China.

About the Composers & Music
Carlos Simon, a versatile composer, arranger and performer, combines the influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism in his music. Simon was named the winner of the prestigious Marvin Hamlisch Film Scoring Award in 2015 and the Presser Award from the Theodore Presser Foundation. In the same year, he served as the young composer-in-residence with the Detroit Chamber Winds and Strings for the 2015-2016 season. Serving as music director and keyboardist for GRAMMY Award winner Jennifer Holliday, he has performed with the Boston Pops Symphony, Jackson Symphony, and the St. Louis Symphony. Simon is currently earning his Doctorate Degree at the University of Michigan, where he has studied with Michael Daugherty and Evan Chambers. He received his Master’s degree at Georgia State University studying with Nickitas Demos and earned his Bachelor’s degree at Morehouse College studying with Robert Tanner. In 2011, he
was on faculty at Morehouse College, teaching music theory. Simon’s *Portrait of a Queen* for ACO, to be premiered on this concert, is a result of his Underwood Emerging Composer Commission win in spring 2016. Of his new piece, Carlos Simon says, “Women have always been the pillar in the African-American community. My piece will trace the evolution of black people in America from the prospective of the African-American female who represents strength, courage and selflessness. Through four movements representing different places and times – Africa, Plantation/Slavery, Southern Jim Crow, and Present Day – I will express her pride, sorrow, anger, and nurturing character. Each movement will be marked by short poetic statements that depict her emotions during her journey from Africa to present day.”

John Corigliano continues to add to one of the richest, most unusual, and most widely celebrated bodies of work any composer has created over the last forty years. Corigliano’s numerous scores – including three symphonies and eight concerti among over one hundred chamber, vocal, choral, and orchestral works – have been performed and recorded by many of the most prominent orchestras, soloists, and chamber musicians in the world. Corigliano’s scores include *Conjurser*, commissioned for and introduced by Dame Evelyn Glennie; Concerto for Violin and Orchestra: *The Red Violin*, *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan*, the recording which won the Grammy for Best Contemporary Composition in 2008; Symphony No. 3: *Circus Maximus*, and Symphony No. 2 (2001 Pulitzer Prize in Music.) Other important scores include String Quartet (1995 Grammy Award, Best Contemporary Composition); Symphony No. 1 (1991 Grawemeyer and Grammy Awards); and the opera *The Ghosts of Versailles* (Metropolitan Opera commission, 1991, International Classical Music Award 1992). Corigliano serves on the composition faculty at the Juilliard School of Music and holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Music at Lehman College, City University of New York. Corigliano wrote *Troubadours* in 1993, 13 years after guitarist Sharon Isbin began asking him to write a guitar concerto for her. Isbin sent Corigliano letters over the years with ideas for the piece – one of which included stories of the age of the troubadours, including tales about women troubadours of the time. Of the piece, Corigliano writes in his note, “I started thinking about the idea of serenading and of song. Slowly the conception of a troubadour concerto began to form. During this process the crystallization of what I love most about the guitar took place: it is an instrument that has always been used to speak directly to an audience. Lyrical, direct, and introspective, it has a natural innocence about it that has attracted amateurs and professionals, young and old. It is very hard to preserve this sense of innocence in the music world we live in. Performers are held to razor-sharp recording standards as they compete with each other for superstardom. Composers have such arsenals of techniques from the past, present, and other cultures, that the idea of true simplicity (in contrast to chic simple-mindedness) is mistrusted and scorned. So the idea of a guitar concerto was, for me, like a nostalgic return to all the feelings I had when I started composing – before the commissions and deadlines and reviews. A time when discovery and optimistic enthusiasm ruled my senses.”

New York-based composer Nina C. Young writes music for concert, dance, film, and theatre. Her music been performed by Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Argento, Either/Or, the JACK Quartet, Sixtrum, and Yarn/Wire. She participated in the 2013 Underwood Readings with American Composers Orchestra. Winner of the 2015-16 Rome Prize in Musical Composition, Young has received a Koussevitzky Commission from the Library of Congress, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Salvatore Martirano Memorial Award, Aspen Music Festival’s Jacob Druckman Prize, and honors from BMI, The International Alliance for Women in Music, and ASCAP/SEAMUS. A graduate of McGill and MIT, Young is currently completing her Doctorate at Columbia University. She worked as a research assistant at the MIT Media Lab and CIRMRT and is now an active participant at the Columbia Computer Music Center. Young’s *Out of whose womb came the ice* tells the story of the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-17, led by famed polar explorer Ernest Shackleton. Young says of the piece, “*Out of whose womb came the ice* looks at the expedition from the time they enter the Weddell Sea (December 1914) to the sinking of the Endurance (November 1915). The vocal and orchestra music focuses on the crew’s perception of the Endurance in relationship to their surroundings. She goes from being simply a ship, to a lifeline and memento that connects them to the world they left behind. Once she sinks, they are truly left alone. The visuals, by R. Luke Dubois, and electronics offer narrative elements drawn directly from documents of the journey: journal entries of the crew and images by expedition’s official photographer Frank Hurley.”

Bright Sheng is respected as one of the leading composers of our time, whose stage, orchestral, chamber and vocal works are performed regularly by the greatest performing arts institutions throughout North America, Europe and Asia. Proclaimed by the MacArthur Foundation in 2001 as “an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries,” Sheng’s music is evident with a strong Asian influence. However, it is the synthesis with Western musical tradition that makes his work truly distinctive and original, an outcome from his profound understanding of both cultures, as Sheng admits: “I consider myself both 100% American and 100% Asian.”
Sheng’s piece, *Postcards*, represents a selection of music postcards from various places in China, incorporating the influence of Chinese folk music. *Postcards* was written for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in 1999.

**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. ACO programs seek to innovate and experiment, educate students and the public, and open the orchestra to diverse new influences and audiences.

To date, ACO has performed music by 800 American composers, including 350 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 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, Columbus, Colorado, San Diego Symphonies, the New York Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony, and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Recently, EarShot introduced an initiative to provide career development and commissions for emerging female composers, and launched an online archive featuring audio excerpts, program notes, and score samples by more than 140 composers whose works have been performed through the EarShot Network. The Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, launched in 2010, supports jazz artists who desire to write for the symphony. 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. ACO is the 2015 recipient of the Champion of New Music Award given by American Composers Forum. 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 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. I* (February 2012), *Orchestra Underground: XI0D* (June 2012), *Orchestra Underground: Tech & Techno* (July 2014), and *SONiC Double Live* (July 2016), a collection of premiere performances from its groundbreaking SONiC: Sounds of a New Century festival. ACO has also released *Orchestra Underground: A-V*, a groundbreaking album of multimedia works available for free streaming at [www.vimeo.com/channels/orchestraunderground](http://www.vimeo.com/channels/orchestraunderground). More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at [www.americancomposers.org](http://www.americancomposers.org).

This press release is available online at [www.americancomposers.org/press-media](http://www.americancomposers.org/press-media)

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EarShot is a program of American Composers Orchestra in partnership with American Composers Forum, the League of American Orchestras, and New Music USA. Made possible with the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding provided by the League of American Orchestras with support of the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.
2016-2017 Calendar

Friday, October 28, 2016 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Seventh Avenue and 57th Street. New York, NY
Orchestra Underground: Contempo-Scary Music
George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Nancy Allen Lundy, narrator and soprano
Maxwell Tfrin, electronics engineer
PAUL MORAVEC: The Overlook Hotel Suite from The Shining (World Premiere, ACO commission)
JUDITH SHATIN: Black Moon (World Premiere, ACO/Carnegie Hall commission)
BERNARD HERRMANN: Psycho Suite
DAVID DEL TREDICI: Dracula
Information: www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2016/10/28/0730/PM/American-Composers-Orchestra

Friday, March 24, 2017 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Seventh Avenue and 57th Street. New York, NY
Orchestra Underground: Past Forward
George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Elizabeth Bates, lyric soprano
Martha Cluver, lyric soprano
Melissa Hughes, alto
Rachel Calloway, high soprano
Mami Kosemura, video artist
STEVE REICH: Tehillim
DAVID HERTZBERG: Chamber Symphony (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood commission)
TREVOR WESTON: Flying Fish (World Premiere, ACO/Carnegie Hall commission)
PAOLA PRESTINI: The Hotel That Time Forgot (World Premiere, ACO/Toulmin commission)
Information: www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2017/3/24/0730/PM/American-Composers-Orchestra

Sunday, April 30, 2017, 8:30pm – Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space
2537 Broadway at 95th Street, New York, NY
American Composers Orchestra in Wall to Wall Steve Reich
Alan Pierson, Guest Conductor
Steve Reich: The Desert Music
Information: www.symphonyspace.org/event/9383/Music/wall-to-wall-steve-reich

Tuesday, May 23, 2017 at 8pm – Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space
2537 Broadway at 95th Street, New York, NY
American Composers Orchestra: ACO Parables
Rossen Milanov, Guest Conductor
Sharon Isbin, guitar
David Tinervia, baritone
Luke DuBois, video
BRIGHT SHENG: Postcards (New York Premiere)
JOHN CORIGLIANO: Troubadours: Variations for Guitar and Orchestra
CARLOS SIMON: Portraits of a Queen (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood commission)
NINA C. YOUNG: Out of whose womb came the ice for baritone, orchestra, & electronics (World Premiere, ACO/Jerome Foundation commission)
Information: www.symphonyspace.org/event/9396/Music/american-composers-orchestra-parables
Wednesday & Thursday, June 22 & 23, 2017 – Cary Hall at The DiMenna Center
450 West 37th Street, New York, NY
Underwood New Music Readings & Commission
George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Derek Bermel, Artistic Director
Libby Larsen, David Rakowski, Trevor Weston, Mentor Composers
ACO’s annual roundup of the country’s brightest young and emerging composers. Participating composers TBA.
Information: www.americancomposers.org/2016/08/15/orchestra-underwood-26th-anniversary

Artists and repertoire subject to change.