



american composers orchestra

news release

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American Composers Orchestra Continues 40th Anniversary Season Performing Steve Reich's *The Desert Music*



**Symphony Space's *Wall to Wall Steve Reich* Marathon
with Alan Pierson, Guest Conductor**

Sunday, April 30, 2017

**Peter Jay Sharp Theatre at Symphony Space | 2537 Broadway at 95th Street, NYC
Wall to Wall Steve Reich runs from 3-10pm. *The Desert Music* will be performed during Segment
3, which starts at 8:30pm. FREE Admission. Information: 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 **Sunday, April 30, 2017** with a performance of **Steve Reich's *The Desert Music*** led by guest conductor **Alan Pierson**. The performance is part of Symphony Space's ***Wall to Wall Steve Reich***, a free and open-to-the-public celebration of Steve Reich's 80th birthday featuring dozens of performers. The seven-hour marathon, which runs from 3-10pm at the Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, is the opening event of Symphony Space's FUSE Project. ACO provides the grand finale, performing *The Desert Music* during the last set of the day, which begins at 8:30pm.

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Steve Reich**'s music has been influential to composers and mainstream musicians all over the world. Reich's music is known for steady pulse, repetition, and a fascination with canons; it combines rigorous structures with propulsive rhythms and seductive instrumental color. This is the second major Reich work that ACO has programmed this season – the orchestra presented Reich's *Tehillim* in March in a sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall, with *The New York Times* praising it as a "transfixing performance."

The Desert Music, written in 1982-1983, is a setting of parts of poems by the poet William Carlos Williams. ACO will perform the edition of *The Desert Music* created by Alan Pierson in 2001, in collaboration with the composer. Of the piece, Reich writes, "I have loved Dr. Williams' poetry since I was 16 years old and picked up a copy of his long poem *Patterson* just because I was fascinated by the symmetry of his name – William Carlos Williams. I have continued reading his work to the present. I find Dr. Williams' finest work to be his late poetry written between 1954 and his death in 1963 at age 80. It is from this period in the poet's work that I have selected the texts for *The Desert Music* – a period after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Dr. Williams was acutely aware of the bomb and his words about it, in a poem about music entitled *The Orchestra* struck me as to the point: 'Say to them:/ Man has survived hitherto because he was too ignorant/ to know how to realize his wishes. Now that he can realize/ them, he must either change them or perish' . . . In the center of the piece is the text, also from *The Orchestra*, which says, 'it is a principle of music/ to repeat the theme. Repeat/ and repeat again,/ as the pace mounts. The/ theme is difficult/ but no more difficult/ than the facts to be/ resolved.' Those at all familiar with my music will know how apt those words are for me and particularly this piece which, among other things, addresses that basic ambiguity between what the text says, and its pure sensuous sounds."

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.

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. 1* (February 2012), *Orchestra Underground: X10D* (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. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

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

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American Composers Orchestra – The Desert Music, April 30, 2017

ACO programs are made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

The Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute is made possible by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Continuing Innovation Program and the Herb Alpert Foundation, with additional funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Fromm Music Foundation and with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Underwood New Music Readings and Commission are made possible with lead support from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Underwood.

Lead support for Music Factory Education programs comes from the Jephson Educational Trust and Ralph Lauren Foundation.

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.



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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.

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Derek Bermel, *Artistic Director* | George Manahan, *Music Director*

Dennis Russell Davies, *Conductor Laureate* | Robert Beaser, *Artistic Director Laureate*

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