American Composers Orchestra Announces

24th Annual Underwood New Music Readings

Wednesday, May 6 at 10am (working rehearsal)
Thursday, May 7 at 7:30pm (run-through)

Featuring Seven of the Nation’s Top Emerging Composers
Conducted by ACO Music Director George Manahan

DiMenna Center for Classical Music | 450 W. 37th St., NYC
FREE & Open to the Public, Reservations Recommended at 212.977.8495 or www.americancomposers.org

High-resolution photos: www.christinajensenpr.com (in ACO’s gallery)

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra’s (ACO) Underwood New Music Readings, the 24th annual roundup of the nation’s top up-and-coming composers, will take place on Wednesday, May 6 and Thursday, May 7, 2015 at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music (450 W. 37th St., NYC). The proceedings are open to the public free of charge, giving audiences a chance to look behind the scenes at the process involved in bringing brand new, stylistically diverse orchestral music to life. The first day of Readings, a working rehearsal, will be presented from 10am to 1pm on Wednesday, May 6; the second day of Readings will take place on Thursday evening, May 7, at 7:30pm, during which all selected pieces will be polished and performed in their entirety. ACO’s Artistic Director Derek Bermel directs the readings; George Manahan conducts. Mentor-composers are Gabriela Lena Frank and Kevin Puts. Events are free and open to the public, but reservations are strongly recommended.

This year, seven of the nation’s most promising composers in the early stages of their professional careers have been selected from 200 submissions received from around the country. The selected composers – Yuanyuan “Kay” He, David Hertzberg, David “Clay” Mettens, Polina Nazaykinskaya, Jules Pegram, Igor Santos, and Carl Schimmel – represent a broad spectrum of musical backgrounds and sound worlds.
They will receive a reading of a new work and one composer will be selected to receive a $15,000 commission for a new piece to be performed by ACO during an upcoming season. The world premiere of 2013 Underwood Commission winner A.J. McCaffrey's new work for ACO, *Motormouth*, was featured on ACO's season opening Orchestra Underground concert on November 21, 2014 at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall. The winner of the 2014 Underwood Commission, Andy Akiho, is composing a new piece that will premiere in October 2015 as part of ACO's SONiC festival. Each composer participating in the Underwood New Music Readings receives rehearsal, reading, and a digital recording of his or her work. Review and feedback sessions with ACO principal players, mentor-composers, guest conductors, and industry representatives provide crucial artistic, technical, and conceptual assistance.

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. Orchestras around the globe have commissioned ACO Readings alumni. The New Music Readings continue ACO's emphasis on launching composers' careers, a tradition that includes many of today's top composers, such as Ellen Taaffe Zwilich and Joseph Schwantner, both of whom received Pulitzer Prizes for ACO commissions; and Robert Beaser, Ingram Marshall, Joan Tower, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Rouse, Sebastian Currier, Melinda Wagner, Derek Bermel, Randall Woolf, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Sebastian Currier, Kate Soper, Jennifer Higdon, and Tobias Picker.

In addition, this year the Readings offer composers, students, or anyone interested in learning more about the business of being a composer *Career Development Seminars* on Thursday, May 7 from 10am-4:00pm at the DiMenna Center. Workshop topics include Intellectual Property, Copyright Law and Commissioning Agreements; Engraving and Self-Publishing; Support and Fundraising for Composers, New Developments with Record Labels; and Publicity and Promotion. The cost for the Seminar is $30, which includes lunch. Reservations can be made at [http://bit.ly/ACO_UNMR2015_Workshops](http://bit.ly/ACO_UNMR2015_Workshops).

2015 Underwood New Music Readings Composers & Their Works

**Yuanyan “Kay” He: Passeig de Gràcia**

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

Yuanyuan (Kay) He (b. 1985) began learning piano at age 5. At age 15, she began studying composition at the affiliated middle school of Shenyang Conservatory of China. As a double major undergraduate, Kay studied composition with Tang Jianping at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and with Zhang Xiaofu at the Conservatory's Center for Electroacoustic Music of China. The winner of the Snow Scholarship, Kay completed her Master's degree in composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. While at UMKC, she studied under Dr. Zhou Long, Dr. Chen Yi, Dr. Paul Rudy, and Dr. James Mobberley. Besides music, she also studied painting at the UMKC Department of Art and Fine Arts. She is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in composition at the University of Texas at Austin, studying under Dr. Dan Welcher, Dr. Russell Pinkston, Dr. Donald Grantham, and Dr. Yevgeniy Sharlat.

As a young composer, Kay has won many composition awards in the U.S. and abroad. Her piece *On the Threshold of a Drizzly Reality* was selected for 2014 performances at the International Computer Music
Conference (ICMC) in Athens, Greece; New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival; and the Root Signals music festival in Jacksonville, Florida; her piano trio *Shadow of Dewdrops* was selected for Gamma UT music festival in 2014; the orchestra piece *Legends of Old Peking* won the Seattle Symphony’s Celebrate Asia Composition in 2012; *Dying Away* won the 2011 DuoSolo Emerging Composer Competition; and *Destiny of the Sputnik* was chosen in the 2011 Beijing Modern Music Festival Young Composers Project.

Of her work Kay says, “*Passeig de Gràcia* for orchestra is dedicated to my parents, who both taught me to appreciate life. The inspiration for this piece came during my solo trip to Barcelona. While wandering around the famous Passeig de Gràcia, I was impressed by the city, the so-called ‘The Great Enchantress.’ The city is like a warm breeze from the Mediterranean Sea intertwined with a passionate and artistic spirit. Barcelona is the city that tells the whole world how it once made a fascinating dream come true. Antoni Gaudí was the dream shaper who filled the real world with gleaming colors, swirling sparks, and painted dreams. He used his magic to ignite the starry sky, embrace us, and fulfill our deepest dreams. These dreams are the remains of his time, floating along with the passion of art. Magic oozes from Barcelona. Mirth saturates in every lonely soul. The orchestra is the medium to express my feeling of this glamorous city, and Gaudi, one of the greatest artists. This is my enchanting, dazzling, and passionate dream come true.”

**David Hertzberg: Spectre of the Spheres**

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

The music of David Hertzberg (b. 1990) has been performed recently at the Aspen, Tanglewood, and Santa Fe festivals, and on the stages of Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. Highlights of his 2014-2015 season include premieres of new works for Young Concert Artists and the PRISM Quartet, a feature on APM’s *Performance Today*, a performance at Hong Kong’s *The Intimacy of Creativity* festival, and a reading with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Other upcoming projects include a large-scale concert work for Gotham Chamber Opera, to be premiered on their 2015-2016 season in New York. Recent engagements include works for sopranos Julia Bullock and Jennifer Zetlan, pianists Ursula Oppens and Steven Lin, the Juilliard Orchestra, the Curtis Orchestra, the New Juilliard Ensemble, the Flux Quartet, the Dover Quartet, and the New Fromm Players. Recent distinctions include those from Gotham Chamber Opera, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Composers Forum, Copland House, Yaddo, Tanglewood, ASCAP, BMI, and Young Concert Artists, where he currently serves as Composer-In-Residence. David began his musical studies at the Colburn School in Los Angeles and received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Samuel Adler. He is currently pursuing an Artist Diploma at The Curtis Institute of Music.

Of his work David says, “In the opening stanzas of *The Auroras of Autumn* (from which my work’s title is drawn), Stevens uses the image of a serpent thrashing after having shed its skin, glimmering and flashing as if possessed, as a metaphor for the majestic beauty of the Northern Lights. I found this idea, of something primordial, that is at once terrifying and arrestingly beautiful, to be a very poignant one, and one ripe for musical expression. With *Spectre of the Spheres* I sought to create something that moves and breathes like the unfettered Aurora, with a reckless vitality, inexorably, and of its own mystical accord.”
David “Clay” Mettens: Sleeping I am carried...

For more information: www.mettensmusic.com

David “Clay” Mettens (b. 1990) is currently a Master’s composition student at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. A native of Covington, KY, he completed his undergraduate studies at the University of South Carolina with a degree in music composition and a clarinet performance certificate. The USC School of Music selected him to be the winner of the 2012 John and Lucretia Herr Composition Award, the 2012 Cantey Award for Excellence, the 2013 Arthur M. Fraser Award, and the 2013 LeDare Robinson Undergraduate Award for Academic Excellence. His primary composition teachers at USC were John Fitz Rogers and Fang Man. At Eastman, he has studied composition with Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon, David Liptak, Robert Morris, and Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, and computer music with Allan Schindler. His orchestra piece Sleeping I am carried... was the winner of Eastman’s 2014 Wayne Brewster Barlow Composition Prize, and received a premiere with the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra in October 2014. He was a finalist for the 2011, 2013, and 2014 ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Awards and a regional finalist for the 2012 SCI/ASCAP Student Commission Competition. He studied composition at the Brevard Music Center with Robert Aldridge and David Dzubay, and attended the 2014 New Music on the Point Chamber Music Festival. Recently, his works have been performed by the Elon University Wind Ensemble; on the Café MoMus new music series at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music; OSSIA, Composers’ Forum, Graduate Composers’ Sinfonietta, and Computer Music Center concerts at Eastman; and in readings by the Eastman Philharmonia Chamber Orchestra, the Eastman Wind Orchestra, the Brevard Sinfonia, and the USC Wind Ensemble.

Of his piece Clay says, “Sleeping I am carried... is based on a melodic fragment from Alban Berg’s Mombert setting ‘Schlafend trägt man mich,’ Op. 2, no. 2. I scatter references to this melody throughout, but perhaps most noticeable is the poetic connection between Mombert’s imagery and the atmosphere and form of my piece. In a dream, Mombert’s speaker traverses a great distance to return home, passing over a landscape whose rough outlines and blurry forms appear only in peripheral vision. My piece transports the listener through a hazy sonic landscape of overlapping musical ideas. One idea emerges and comes into focus, only to disappear again, as another comes to the fore. Wispy lines in the strings and flutes wind around each other, and rumbles ascend from the depths of the orchestra. In a moment of clarity near the end, Berg's vocal line appears complete as the bass line of a radiant chorale. This subsides, and the piece comes to rest on an extended melody in the strings, concluding with a final evaporation of the dream world.”

Polina Nazaykinskaya: Nature’s Book of Life

Born in Togliatti, an industrial city on the Volga River in Russia, Polina Nazaykinskaya (b. 1987) studied piano, violin and flute as a child, and as a teenager at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory she concentrated on violin and composition. She came to the U.S. to attend the Yale School of Music, where she completed a Master’s degree in composition and theory and artist diploma in composition, working with Christopher Theofanidis and Ezra Laderman. She is now is pursuing her doctorate in composition at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, studying with Tania León. She has won numerous awards including the Charles Ives Scholarship at The American Academy of Arts and Letters and has garnered performances by ensembles including the Minnesota Orchestra, the Russian National Orchestra, the
Hermitage Orchestra and Chorus, the Yale Philharmonia Orchestra, the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Russia, the Omsk Philharmonic Orchestra, the St. Olaf Philharmonia and the Juventas New Music Ensemble, where her chamber opera, *The Magic Mirror*, drew considerable attention for its elegance and rich, intricate score.

Of *Nature’s Book of Life*, Polina says, “Rhythms and sounds can reveal the power of the invisible world. Turning the pages of the *Nature’s Book of Life*, one may re-discover a sense of mystery that is part and parcel of our existence. Learning to see the words that have not been written down gives one the ability to perceive the contours of light and darkness more clearly and understand the wind that brings change. The difference between a deeper communication with the forces of nature and a method of divination disappears as future and the past become intertwined.”

**Jules Pegram: Shadows of the Studio**

For more information, please visit www.julespegram.com

Composer Jules Pegram (b. 1991) writes music modern in its sensibility and sophisticated in its craft, yet full of shimmering colors, boundless energy, and an unbridled lyricism. His kaleidoscopic sound-world is influenced by everything from contemporary concert music and the rigors of modernism to film and television scores, show tunes, urban environments, popular culture, and the natural world. In 2013, Jules’ orchestral work *Neon Nights* was selected as the winning composition in both the Marilyn K. Glick and Symphony in C Young Composers Competitions, resulting in performances by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and New Jersey’s Symphony in C, respectively. Other awards include recognition as a Finalist in the 2012 ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composers Competition as well as in the 3rd International Frank Ticheli Composition Contest, the Presser Foundation’s Undergraduate Scholar Award, the Sadye J. Moss Endowed Music Composition Prize, selection in both the University of Southern California New Music for Orchestra and Indiana State University's "Music Now" competitions, and “Honorable Mention” in the Donald Sinta Quartet's National Composition Competition. He was also a recipient of the USC Discovery Scholars prize and was named an Outstanding Graduate of the USC Thornton School of Music's Department of Composition. Jules is pursuing the Master of Music in Composition at the University of Michigan, where he has studied with Michael Daugherty and Bright Sheng. Pegram received the Bachelor of Music in Composition (*summa cum laude*) from the University of Southern California, where he studied with Oscar nominee Bruce Broughton, Frank Ticheli, Morten Lauridsen, Stephen Hartke, Donald Crockett, Erica Muhl, and USC Trojan Marching Band arranger Tony Fox. He studied classical piano with Alin Melik-Adamyan and jazz piano with Yellowjackets keyboardist Russell Ferrante.

Of *Shadows of the Studio* Jules says, “*Shadows of the Studio* for Orchestra is my musical tribute to the glory days of Hollywood’s ‘studio system,’ a factory-like production setup that allowed for the efficient, speedy creation and distribution of quality motion pictures, thousands of which are now considered cinema classics. This landmark era of filmmaking spanned from the rise of the major studios in the 1920s up until the studio system’s ultimate demise in the 1950s. During that illustrious period, movie moguls like Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer fame served as helms of production at their respective studios, reigning over a vast filmic empire the likes of which will surely never be seen again.”
Igor Santos: *play, pivot*

For more information: [www.igorsantos.org](http://www.igorsantos.org)

Igor Santos (b. 1985) is a Brazilian-American composer of acoustic and electro-acoustic concert music. His works have been performed by groups such as eighth blackbird, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Spektral Quartet and The Florida Orchestra. Igor is currently Ph.D. candidate in Music Composition at the University of Chicago. He received his Master's degree from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied under Ricardo Zohn-Muldoon and Carlos Sánchez-Gutiérrez. At Eastman he was an active member of the Ossia New Music group, assisting in organizing and promoting concerts of contemporary music. He received his B.M. in composition from the University of South Florida, where he was active as board member and pianist for the USF Composer's Consortium. Igor is currently studying under Shulamit Ran, Marta Ptaszynska, Augusta Read Thomas and Anthony Cheung. Additional studies include workshops and festivals such as ManiFeste, Synthetis, Fontainebleau, and Brevard Music Center.

Of *play, pivot*, Igor says, “This is the first work in a series of pieces of mine that attempt to create a narratological structure using the superposition of music with completely different characters. This is clear, for instance, in the harp solo music, which is always punctuated and interrupted by other abrasive, stubborn gestures. Other instances of interruption govern and organize most of the rhetoric in the music – either by cancelling or triggering different textures, layers and affects.”

Carl Schimmel: *Two Variations on Ascent into the Empyrean*

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

Carl Schimmel (b. 1975) is a composer based in Iowa and Illinois. In infusing his music with extra-musical influences such as poetry, art, and even unusual words, he strives to construct nexuses of experience that reflect both the inner life of emotions and the outer physical world which shapes us and is shaped by us. Winner of Columbia University’s Joseph Beards Prize and the Lee Ettelson Award, Carl has received honors and awards from many organizations, including the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Copland House, New Music USA, and ASCAP. His works have been performed in Carnegie Hall’s Weill Hall, Merkin Hall in New York, Severance Hall in Cleveland, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London, Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis, and at other venues throughout North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. He has received performances and commissions from the California EAR Unit, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, the Minnesota Orchestra, North/South Consonance, saxophonist Taimur Sullivan, the Da Capo Chamber Players, Lucy Shelton, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and many others. A graduate of Duke University (Ph.D.), the Yale School of Music (M.M.), and Case Western Reserve University (B.A. Mathematics and Music), he is currently Assistant Professor of Music Theory and Composition at Illinois State University in Normal, IL.

Of his piece, Carl says, “*Two Variations on Ascent into the Empyrean* is a pair of short orchestral movements inspired by my children’s artwork entitled ‘Rainbow for Mama, with Door’ (Thora, at age 3 yrs. 9 mos.) and ‘Rocketship and Blast-off Fire’ (Otto, at age 3 yrs. 11 mos.). The drawings, for me, reflect the children’s fascination with the immensity of our world and provide a glimpse into the immensity of the worlds inside their minds. Both transport us into the heavens – the Empyrean – and beyond. But while
Thora enters this realm via a small golden portal, Otto is propelled skyward by the colossal power of a rocket, leaving in his wake a spectacular rush of fire and smoke.”

**About American Composers Orchestra**

Now in its 38th season, 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 and continuing in 2015, 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 in Community Engagement, and a proclamation from the New York City Council. ACO recordings
Underwood New Music Readings – May 6 & 7, 2015


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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.

american composers orchestra

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2014-2015 Season Highlights

Friday, November 21, 2014 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Orchestra Underground: Monk’s Sphere
   George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
   Theo Bleckmann, vocals
   Ian Williams, electronics
   Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble
IAN WILLIAMS: Clear Image (World Premiere, ACO/Goelet Commission)
AJ McCAFFREY: Motormouth (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood Commission)
LOREN LOIACANO: Stalks, Hounds (NY Premiere)
THEO BLECKMANN: My Brightest Garment (World Premiere, Carnegie Hall Commission)
MEREDITH MONK: Night

Friday, February 27, 2015 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Orchestra Underground: Sins & Songs
   George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
   Shara Worden / My Brightest Diamond, vocals
   Hudson Shad, vocal ensemble
   Khari Joyner, cello
KURT WEILL: The Seven Deadly Sins
MY BRIGHTEST DIAMOND: Whoever You Are; We Added It Up; Looking at the Sun
SARAH KIRKLAND SNIDER: Selections from Unremembered
DANIEL SCHNYDER: DraKool (US Premiere)
CARMAN MOORE: MADIBA (World Premiere, ACO Commission)

Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 8pm – Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center
American Composers Orchestra: Blues Symphony & Beyond
   George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
   Uri Caine, piano
COURTNEY BRYAN: Sanctum for Orchestra & Recorded Sound (World Premiere, ACO/Jerome/Heller Commission)
URI CAINE: Double Trouble (revised and expanded, ACO commission)
WYNTON MARALIS: Blues Symphony (NY Premiere)

Wednesday & Thursday, May 6 & 7, 2015 – The DiMenna Center for Classical Music
Underwood New Music Readings
   George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
   Derek Bermel, Artistic Director; Gabriela Lena Frank & Kevin Puts, mentor-composers
ACO’s annual roundup of the country’s brightest young and emerging composers.

Plus:
Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute – UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, Los Angeles, CA
Summer Intensive, August 8-13, 2015

EarShot New Music Readings
from ACO’s National Orchestral Composition Discovery Network

coLABoratory: Playing It UNsafe
Laboratory for the research and development of cutting-edge new orchestra music

Artists and repertoire subject to change.