



american composers orchestra

news release

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## American Composers Orchestra President Michael Geller Departing in December

New York, NY – After 20 years as executive leader of **American Composers Orchestra (ACO)**, President and CEO **Michael Geller** will depart the organization at the end of 2016. He is leaving to attend to personal and family obligations while considering new professional opportunities. ACO's Board of Directors is seeking a new executive director who will continue to build upon the success and stability that Geller has spearheaded over the past 20 years.

"Michael Geller's contribution to ACO has been enormous," says ACO Artistic Director **Derek Bermel**. "Through a combination of vision and commitment, he has steered the orchestra through two exciting decades of evolution and innovation."

ACO Music Director **George Manahan** says, "Working with Michael for my past six years as ACO's Music Director, I have seen first hand his strong commitment and devotion to the orchestra. We owe him our sincere gratitude for his many years of leadership. "

Geller leaves ACO in a strong position financially and artistically. The organization's endowment has tripled since his arrival in 1996, and ACO's programs have expanded significantly. Geller says, "ACO's balance sheet is stronger than it has ever been. And with the conclusion of our second New York City-wide SONiC festival, third nationwide Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, and our 11th season of Orchestra Underground at Carnegie Hall, ACO has offered up some of its boldest and most diverse programming ever. This is also a time for planning what the next generation of ACO's artistic agenda will be, and thus a great moment for a new executive to 'dive in' and pursue that work."

ACO Board of Directors Chairman **Frederick Wertheim** says, "Thanks to Michael's skilled leadership, his dedication to ACO and his passion for new music, ACO has survived and even thrived during some challenging periods for arts organizations. The board is very grateful for all he has done for ACO."

Geller has guided ACO's strong industry-leading program for a generation, and his accomplishments include ACO's first touring performances in 20 years; the Orchestra Tech initiative which integrated digital technology into the orchestra; Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, which trains jazz composers and diversifies orchestra repertoire, taking it in new directions; Coming to America, which explored the continual evolution of American music through the work of immigrant composers and won the inaugural MetLife Award for audience engagement, becoming an industry model for engaging multi-generational audiences in the

emerging field of arts-based civic dialogue; Playing It UNsafe: coLABoratory, ACO's R&D lab, which developed a model for creative experimentation in orchestra music; the creation and growth of ACO's first educational program, Music Factory, now working with 15+ schools and community organizations and reaching over 3,000 schoolchildren annually; the launch and growth of the EarShot network, sharing ACO resources and expertise with orchestras around the country, leveraging ACO's mission, building new partnerships, and creating multiple expanded opportunities for emerging American composers in orchestras from Berkeley, CA to Buffalo, NY, and orchestras as large as the New York Philharmonic; overseeing and implementing the first digital releases and online streams undertaken by the orchestra, making dozens of world premiere recordings available around the world for the first time; conceptualizing and implementing Orchestra Underground, redefining the orchestra with new influences and multidisciplinary collaborations, premiering 90 new works in its first 12 years; the launch of major initiatives to promote diversity in orchestra music, including fellowships for minority composers, education programs, and career development programs for women and other under-represented artists in orchestra music; planning and executing two highly successful SONiC (Sounds of a New Century) festivals, the largest undertakings in ACO's history, including 200 emerging composers with a diverse array of music, all of it composed in 21st Century.

In a letter to ACO's board, Geller added, "I have enjoyed working with everyone on the board, as well as so many colleagues, composers and artists over the last two decades. ACO is a special organization, and I will always cherish my time here."

ACO's Board of Directors has formed a search committee to be aided by an executive search firm to fill the vacancy left by Geller's departure.

## **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 800 American composers, including 350 world premieres and newly commissioned works. 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. 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](http://www.americancomposers.org/press)*

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