



american composers orchestra

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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American Composers Orchestra Continues 40th Anniversary Season

Six Composers Selected for the 26th Underwood New Music Readings



Thursday, June 22, 2017 at 10am (open rehearsal)
Friday, June 23, 2017 at 7:30pm (run-through performance)
DiMenna Center for Classical Music | 450 W. 37th St. | NYC

**Free and open to the public, reservations suggested at
212.977.8495 or www.americancomposers.org**

New York, NY – **American Composers Orchestra (ACO)** continues its 40th anniversary season and its commitment to serving as a catalyst for the creation and development of new orchestral music with the **26th Annual Underwood New Music Readings** on **Thursday, June 22 and Friday, June 23, 2017** 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 Thursday, June 22**; the second day of Readings will take place on **Friday evening, June 23, at 7:30pm**, during which all selected pieces will be polished and performed in their entirety. ACO Artistic Director **Derek Bermel** directs the Readings; ACO Music Director **George Manahan** conducts. Mentor composers are **Libby Larsen, David Rakowski, and Trevor Weston**. Events are free and open to the public, but reservations via ACO's website (www.americancomposers.org) are strongly recommended.

This year, six of the nation's most promising composers in the early stages of their professional careers have been selected from over 250 submissions received from around the country. The selected composers – **James Diaz, Nick DiBerardino, Martin Kennedy, Hilary Purrington, Alexander Timofeev, and Yucong (Zoe) Wang** – 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 2016 Underwood Commission winner **Carlos Simon's** new work for ACO, *Portrait of a Queen*, will be featured on ACO's **May 23, 2017** concert at **Symphony Space**. Each composer participating in the Underwood New Music Readings receives rehearsals, a reading, and a digital recording of his or her work. Review and feedback sessions with ACO principal players, mentor composers, ACO's artistic and music directors, and industry representatives provide crucial artistic, technical, and conceptual assistance.

In addition, the Readings offer composers, students, or anyone interested in learning more about the business of being a composer Career Development Seminar on Friday, June 23 from 10am-4pm at Cary Hall, DiMenna Center for Classical Music. Workshops include talks on Intellectual Property, Copyright Law and Commissioning Agreements; a panel discussion on career strategy with some of the most successful young composers working today; and a panel discussion on programming with major music presenters. The cost for the Seminar is \$25 (includes box lunch). Reservations can be made at www.americancomposers.org.

For over a generation, ACO's **Underwood New Music Readings** have been providing all-important career development and public exposure to the country's most promising emerging composers, with over 150 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 have served as a launch pad for 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 ACO's own Artistic Director **Derek Bermel**, as well as composers **Lisa Bielawa, Anthony Cheung, Anna Clyne, Cindy Cox, Sebastian Currier, Jennifer Higdon, Pierre Jalbert, Aaron Jay Kernis, Hannah Lash, Ingram Marshall, Carter Pann, P.Q. Phan, Tobias Picker, Narong Prangcharoen, Paola Prestini, David Rakowski, Daniel Bernard Roumain, Christopher Rouse, Huang Ruo, Eric Samuelson, Carlos Sanchez-Guiterrez, Kate Soper, Gregory Spears, Joan Tower, Ken Ueno, Dan Visconti, Melinda Wagner, Wang Jie, Dalit Warshaw, Randall Woolf, Nina Young, and Roger Zare**.

About the 2017 Underwood New Music Readings Composers

James Diaz: *From infinity*

New York-based composer **James Diaz** (b. 1990) is the winner of the 2015 National Prize of Music in Composition by the Ministry of Culture of Colombia for his Concerto for Percussion Trio and Orchestra, *Saturn Lights*. As winner of the 2014 Prize of Music in Composition for the reopening of the Teatro Colón, his orchestral piece *Ecllosion* was premiered by conductor Claudio Cruz and the National Symphony Orchestra of Colombia and recently has been recorded by the conductor Cecilia Espinosa and the EAFIT Symphony Orchestra for the upcoming album, *New Colombian Music for Orchestra*. Diaz has also won several competitions for his chamber and wind ensemble music, including the 2015 Coral and Symphony Composition Award by the Bogotá Philharmonic, the 2013 Composition Prize of the International Winter Festival of Campos do Jordão for his string quartet *Dynamics of Meteorite* and the XV National Award for Musical Composition City of Bogotá by the Bogotá Philharmonic for his work *Iron Curtains*. Diaz studied composition with Moisés Bertrán, Harold Vázquez and Gustavo Parra at the National Conservatory of Music, where he received his B.M. in Composition in 2015. He was a two-time Composition Fellow at the International Winter Festival of Campos do Jordao, Brazil; and is currently pursuing an M.M. in Composition at the Manhattan School of Music, where he is studying composition with Reiko Fueting.

Diaz's piece which will be read by ACO, ***From infinity*** for orchestra, is an imaginary perspective of an unreal landscape. Diaz says, "The unreal landscape is inspired by the question 'What would be our reaction if we could see our planet, our home, our bodies from a long distance?' As an answer, I created a nonexistent plane that will take us from common spaces to distorted atmospheres. Floating bright and suspended patterns and textures

represent a sort of spatial aloneness. On the other hand, a fanfare-like texture evokes a kind of human spirit that is full of energy, unstable and heavy.”

Nick DiBerardino: *Mercury-Redstone 3*

Rhodes Scholar **Nick DiBerardino** (b. 1989), hailed as a “bright young star” and a “first-rate talent” by the *Portland Press Herald*, composes music that is diverse in style but always oriented toward meaningful narrative arcs. DiBerardino has received recognition from many institutions, including the Music Teachers’ National Association, the National Federation of Music Clubs, the New York Art Ensemble, the Boston New Music Initiative, PARMA Recordings, the New York Youth Symphony, ASCAP, and the American Composers Forum. Recent accolades include winning the Portland Chamber Music Festival Composition Competition, garnering a soundSCAPE Composition Prize, and receiving a Horizon Award from Connecticut’s Westport Arts Advisory Committee, given to young artists who have achieved “measurable excellence” in their field. DiBerardino’s orchestral music has been programmed by the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the Minnesota Orchestra. He earned his bachelor’s degree at Princeton University and an M.Phil with distinction the University of Oxford, and also holds an M.M. from the Yale School of Music. He furthered his studies with the New York Youth Symphony, the European American Musical Alliance, the Brevard Music Center, the Aspen Music Festival, the Norfolk New Music Workshop, the highSCORE festival, the soundSCAPE festival, and the Bowdoin International Music Festival, where his work was featured on the Charles E. Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music. He serves as the musical studies lead instructor and curriculum coordinator at Curtis’ Young Artist Summer Program and is currently composer-in-residence at the Luzerne Music Center. DiBerardino is pursuing a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in composition at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he has studied with Jennifer Higdon and David Ludwig.

DiBerardino’s piece, *Mercury-Redstone 3*, is named after the NASA mission that first sent an American astronaut, Alan Shepard, into space. Of the work, he says, “To imagine that first U.S. spaceflight is to think of the unadulterated thrill of exploration and an unfathomable exhilaration. What must it have felt like to be among the first to touch the sky? I hope to capture in this piece some of the sense of wonder and excitement that NASA, and the sheer audacity of human spaceflight, have brought me since I was young.”

Martin Kennedy: *Siren, blind*

Martin Kennedy (b. 1978) began his training at Indiana University, where he received a B.M. in both Composition and Piano Performance. He went on to earn an M.M. in Composition at Indiana University and a Doctor of Musical Arts at the Juilliard School where he was a C.V. Starr Doctoral Fellow. His principal teachers in composition include Samuel Adler, Milton Babbitt, Claude Baker, David Dzubay, Don Freund, and Sydney Hodkinson. His principal teachers in piano include Jeremy Denk and Evelyne Brancart. Kennedy’s music has been performed internationally by numerous artists and ensembles, including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra Teatro Comunale di Bologna, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, Wisconsin Philharmonic, Bloomington Camerata, Symphony in C, and Tuscaloosa Symphony. He is the recipient of several prestigious prizes, including the ASCAP Foundation Rudolf Nissim Prize, the ‘2 Agosto’ International Composition Prize, a BMI Student Composer Award, five ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Awards, the Suzanne and Lee Ettleson prize, the ASCAP Raymond Hubbel Award, fellowships at the MacDowell and Yaddo Artist Colonies, an Aaron Copland Award, and two Indiana University Dean’s Prizes in Composition. Kennedy’s music is available on the Ancalagon, Anbardy, Azica, Centaur, and Riaux labels and is published by Theodore Presser Company and G. Schirmer Inc. Previously a member of the academic faculty at Washington University in St. Louis, he is currently the Director of Composition and Theory at Central Washington University in Washington State.

Kennedy’s piece, *Siren, blind*, is inspired by Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and Kafka’s *The Silence of the Sirens* – their writings on mythical sirens and the ships who did not heed their call.

Hilary Purrington: *Likely Pictures in Haphazard Sky*

Hilary Purrington (b. 1990) is a New England-based composer whose work has been recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), and the National Federation of Music Clubs (NFMC), among others. In the summer of 2012, Purrington received funding through a Wagoner Foreign Study Grant to study Music Composition and German Language at the Freie Universität Berlin, and in the summer of 2013, she participated as a Fellow at the Yale School of Music Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. Most recently, she was featured in the 2016 NY PHIL BIENNIAL. Purrington’s music

has been performed by many distinguished ensembles, including the Peabody Modern Orchestra, the Yale Philharmonia, the American Modern Ensemble, and the ChoralArt Camerata. Recent commissions include new works for the Chicago Harp Quartet, the Musical Chairs Chamber Ensemble, and the Melodia Women's Choir of NYC. Upcoming projects include commissions from Washington Square Winds, inFLUX, and the New York Youth Symphony. Purrington holds degrees from The Juilliard School and the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. She is currently pursuing a Master of Musical Arts at the Yale School of Music.

Purrington's piece, *Likely Pictures in Haphazard Sky*, contrasts moments of delicate sparseness with passages of rich textures and emphatic lyricism. The title comes from a poem called "Starlight" by William Meredith. Meredith uses constellations to explore, among other things, humanity's natural fear of randomness and instinctive desire to find or create meaningful patterns.

Alexander Timofeev: *Fantasme* for Orchestra

Alexander Timofeev (b. 1983) debuted as a composer at age 19 performing his Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2003) with the National Philharmonic Orchestra of Moldova. He premiered his works at the Thailand International Composition Festival, Hariclea Darclee Festival and Voice Competition (Romania), Oxford Piano Festival (UK), Novye Imena (Russia), Northern Lights Festival (USA) and received awards for his compositions at Sergey Slonimsky International Competition (Russia), Valasske Mezirici International Festival and Cimbalom Competition (Czech Republic), and Carl Filtsch International Competition (Romania). He is the winner of the 2016 Richard Weerts Composition Competition, and a finalist of the 2016 Thailand International Composition Festival. His recent premieres include the Five Songs on Poems by Agnesa Rosca for Soprano and Piano (2015), Concerto for Two Pianos and Chamber Orchestra (2014), and Concerto for Cimbalom and Orchestra (2013). His compositions have been broadcast on WQXR and presented in live performances on Pro TV (Romania) and Tele-Radio Moldova. In 2008 Timofeev founded the International Society of Pianists and Composers (ispci.org), a non-profit organization that promotes contemporary music written for piano. Started as a creative circle of composers and performers, graduates of the Eastman School of Music, it now represents a growing network of musicians from over 20 countries. Alexander Timofeev completed his D.M.A. at the University of Maryland, College Park. He holds an M.M. from the Eastman School of Music and a B.M. from Rowan University. Timofeev currently resides in Philadelphia; he is an Artist-in-Residence at Rowan University.

Timofeev describes his piece, *Fantasme* for orchestra, as a "a sequence of contrasting musical images, an emotional journey that could take the listener in an unexpected direction." The work is inspired by the composer's experience of a melody by Mozart.

Yucong (Zoe) Wang: *Blackbird*

Yucong (Zoe) Wang (b. 1993) began studying piano at age six and composition when she was 11. In 2011, she entered the Shanghai Conservatory as the top-ranked student, studying composition with Professor Gang Chen and Professor Huang Lv. In 2013, she entered the Eastman School of Music to pursue a B.M. in composition. Wang's compositions have been performed at many concerts in Shanghai, at the Eastman School of Music, the George Eastman House, the Strong National Museum, and the University of Oregon. In 2016, she collaborated with the Deviant Septet, and her piece, *The Ecstasy of Six Persian Poems*, was performed by the septet at the Warren and Patricia Benson Forum on Creativity. In the same year, she was commissioned to write a piece for the 2016 Toy Hall of Fame at the Strong National Museum. Her past composition awards include second prize in the Confucius Award Composition Competition (2009) for her Chinese instrumental trio, *Yi*, and first prize in the Young Promise Composition Competition (2011) for her mixed quintet, *The Reverse of 12 Hours*. She also received the Eastman School's Belle Gitleman award in 2016 for her chamber pieces, *Five Wright Songs* and *The Ecstasy of Six Persian Poems*.

Of her piece that ACO will read, *Blackbird*, Wang says, "The documentary *Le peuple migrateur* directed by Jacques Perrin instigated my inspiration to write this piece. I was fascinated by its depiction of the movements of birds, and struck by the power of nature that dominates all creatures. During the writing process of the piece, I did not have any specific breed of bird in mind. Only after I finished it, one of my best friends suggested the title 'Blackbird,' not referring to the specific breed, but rather the bird that exists in the Ancient Chinese Mythology."

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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