



american composers orchestra

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 26, 2018

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American Composers Orchestra Announces

Aiden Feltkamp

As Emerging Composers & Diversity Director

A Newly Established Full-Time Position

www.americancomposers.org

New York, NY – **American Composers Orchestra (ACO)** is pleased to announce that **Aiden Feltkamp** has joined the orchestra’s staff in the newly created role of **Emerging Composers and Diversity Director**, effective immediately.

In this new position, Feltkamp will manage ACO’s emerging composer programs, diversity initiatives, and relationships with industry partners. He will build ACO’s network of partners, advisors, and other contacts to ensure access to a wide spectrum of emerging composer applicants, overseeing emerging composer recruitment efforts including promotion and application materials. In addition, Feltkamp will advise on how to promote greater diversity on the staff and board of the organization as well as among the composers who are commissioned and performed. He will be instrumental in forming a Diversity Advisory Committee to help ACO further these efforts.

Serving American composers inclusive of the full spectrum of gender identity, ethnicity, geographic location, and style is at the core of ACO’s mission. Under the new leadership of President **Edward Yim**, ACO recently completed a three-year strategic plan with consulting group DUNCH Arts. As part of this plan, the ACO’s vision is focused on four key areas: Concerts, Emerging Composers, Education and Diversity. The new position is designed to allow ACO to reach its ambitious goals for expansion in the areas of Diversity and Emerging Composers as they intersect with the orchestra’s current activities. Ultimately, ACO’s goal is that its application pool for its emerging composer opportunities reflects the diversity of the American population.

Yim notes, “Thanks to generous and targeted funding from the Altman and Andrew W. Mellon Foundations, ACO is delighted to welcome Aiden Feltkamp. His entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to music, and dedication to inclusiveness make him a great fit for our vision and strategy, and we are looking forward to serving emerging composers and our field with such a great individual on our team.”

“We have the power to sculpt the future of classical music, and I firmly believe that in order for this genre to thrive, it must reflect the complexity and diversity of the world we live in,” says Feltkamp. “I’ve been so impressed by ACO’s work to increase inclusion and stimulate change in orchestral music. I couldn’t be more excited to join the team.”

Aiden Kim Feltkamp (they/he) began his musical life at the age of five playing a quarter-size cello and now he champions new classical music and opera as a trans nonbinary librettist, producer, performer, and educator. Mx. Feltkamp is

passionate about diversity and inclusion, especially in the classical music field. This spring, he hosted a panel about Gender Representation in New Opera at the New Music Gathering in Boston and participated on a panel about gender hosted by the New York Opera Alliance with Cori Ellison, Mark Adamo, Jecca Barry, Steven Osgood, and Anthony Roth Costanzo.

In 2015, Feltkamp founded OperaRox Productions, a non-profit dedicated to serving underrepresented artists and fostering the next generation of opera through socially relevant productions. In his time as Artistic Director, he has commissioned two full-length operas and more than four song cycles from emerging composers. Last summer he produced the second lesbian opera ever written, Griffin Candey's *Sweets by Kate*, at the historic Stonewall Inn. This marked the venue's first presentation of an LGBTQ-themed opera. Before beginning his medical transition, Feltkamp performed as a mezzo-soprano specializing in Baroque opera and new music. He has premiered multiple roles, including The Old Drifter in Shawn Jaeger's *Payne Hollow*, Elizabeth in Griffin Candey's *Sweets by Kate*, and The Son in Stephanie Leotsako's *OMG*. He was also the first mezzo-soprano to sing the role of The Pig in Oliver Knussen's *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* in the award-winning *The Magic Flute Redux* directed by Nic Muni. He also performed Ottavia in a Baroque gesture production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea* under the direction of Drew Minter.

As a writer, Feltkamp's written work spans live performance reviews and interviews with classical music industry leaders to supplemental program material and editorials. Most recently, he wrote program notes for the *Æpex* Contemporary Performance's production of *As One* (Laura Kaminsky) in Ann Arbor, MI. Three of Feltkamp's opera libretti will workshop this year at The National Opera Center in NYC: *The Times are Nightfall* (Ross Crean), *Ghost Variations* (Tony Manfredonia), and *Silver and Stars* (Brin Solomon). His song cycle about Joan of Arc, commissioned by the Seen/Heard Trio and set by Lisa Neher, will premiere on the ensemble's tour next summer and his song cycle focusing on mental illness with composer Patricia Wallinga will premiere next spring.

Feltkamp received his M.M. from the Bard College Conservatory of Music in Dawn Upshaw's Graduate Vocal Arts Program and his B.S. in Vocal Performance from Hofstra University. He has had the honor of working with Leon Botstein, Charles Jarden, Peter Sellars, Isabel Milenski, Edda Moser, and the late Nico Castel.

About ACO

MISSION & HISTORY: American Composers Orchestra (ACO) is dedicated to the creation, celebration, performance, and promotion of orchestral music by American composers. With commitment to diversity, disruption and discovery, ACO produces concerts, K-12 education programs and emerging composer development programs to foster a community of creators, audience, performers, collaborators, and funders.

ACO identifies and develops talent, champions established composers as well as those lesser-known, and increases regional, national, and international awareness of the infinite variety of American orchestral music, reflecting gender, ethnic, geographic, stylistic, and temporal diversity. To date, ACO has performed music by 800 American composers, including over 350 world premieres and newly commissioned works. ACO recordings are available on ARGO, CRI, ECM, Point, Phoenix USA, MusicMasters, Nonesuch, Tzadik, New World Records, InstantEncore.com, Amazon.com and iTunes.

CONCERTS: In the 2017-2018 season, ACO presented two concerts at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, coproduced the NY premiere of the acclaimed opera *Fellow Travelers* in collaboration with the PROTOTYPE Festival, and celebrated its 40th Anniversary Season with a gala concert at the Rose Theater at Lincoln Center. On the gala concert, the New York Times noted, "this essential ensemble has helped define what it means to be American in 2017, embracing gender, ethnic, national and stylistic diversity. [The] varied program offered exhilarating evidence." The 2018-2019 season brings premieres of works by Alex Temple, Pulitzer Prize winner Du Yun, and Valerie Coleman as well as works by American icons such as Joan Tower and Morton Feldman.

EMERGING COMPOSERS: Through the Underwood New Music Readings each year, ACO selects up to six emerging composers to travel to New York City to meet with artistic staff, orchestra members – including the conductor and mentor composers – and spend three days working with the orchestra. At the program’s conclusion, two composers are awarded \$15,000 commissions to write new works to be performed by ACO in a future season. Nationally, EarShot enables orchestras across the country to identify talented young composers. With guidance from ACO, partner orchestras – such as the Detroit Symphony, the Berkeley Symphony and the Buffalo Philharmonic – undertake readings, residencies, performances and composer-development programs that speak directly to their communities and leverage local resources. A new platform for commissioning participants of EarShot readings is slated to begin in the 2018-2019 season.

EDUCATION: For nearly two decades, ACO has brought composers and musical teaching artists into New York City public schools through Music Factory. Students in Brooklyn, Bronx, Manhattan and Queens, work directly with professional composers to create and perform original music. ACO also offers the intensive Compose Yourself seminars, during which high school composers will participate in hands-on composition classes, culminating in a performance of student compositions played by ACO’s professional musicians.

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

Institutional Support for American Composers Orchestra is provided by The Herb Alpert Foundation, Altman Foundation, The Amphion Foundation, Inc., The ASCAP Foundation Irving Caesar Fund, BMI Classical & the BMI Foundation, The Cheswaty Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Ford Foundation’s Good Neighbor Committee, Fromm Music Foundation, Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, Jephson Educational Trust, League of American Orchestras, MAP Fund, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Morgan Stanley, New Music USA, Pacific Harmony Fund, Rexford Fund, Rolex Institute, The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, and The Women’s Philharmonic Advocacy.

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

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