George Manahan Transitions to Music Director Emeritus of American Composers Orchestra

New York, NY – American Composers Orchestra and George Manahan announce that after ten years as Music Director of ACO, Manahan will transition to Music Director Emeritus at the conclusion of his current contract, on July 1, 2021. Since becoming Music Director in 2010, Manahan has led the orchestra in numerous performances at Carnegie Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Symphony Space, and more, conducting 191 works by 162 composers and premiering 82 new pieces in concert. Manahan is the third music director of ACO since its inception in 1977, following founding conductor Dennis Russell Davis (1977-2002) and Steven Sloane (2002-2010).

ACO Artistic Director Derek Bermel said, “George is a phenomenal musician whose professionalism, skills, and musical insight have earned him the love and respect of our orchestra, composers, soloists, and audiences. His leadership has always kept ACO in the most capable of hands. Personally, I am extraordinarily grateful and proud to have collaborated with this consummate artist and educator whose work spans the gamut of symphonic music, opera, and beyond. I look forward to continuing to work with George in his role as Music Director Emeritus.”

“After ten meaningful years as Music Director of American Composers Orchestra, I have decided to move on to the role of Music Director Emeritus,” said Manahan. “Being a part of bringing new music by both young and established composers into the orchestral repertoire has been incredibly rewarding, and a great pleasure. And, working with ACO’s musicians has always been a joy – they are expert at what they do, and I am glad to have shared the stage with them for so many years.”

ACO Board President Sameera Troesch said, “We are incredibly grateful for the decade that George Manahan has spent with ACO. George’s work as Music Director has created a spark that has captivated and inspired the ACO family – audiences, composers, and performers alike. On behalf of the Board, I thank George for sharing his passion and perspective, for the benefit of ACO. We look forward to welcoming him back to the podium in the future as a guest conductor.”
The wide-ranging and versatile George Manahan has an esteemed career embracing everything from opera to the concert stage, the traditional to the contemporary. His enthusiasm for contemporary music has been integral; he has conducted numerous world premieres, including Charles Wuorinen’s *Haroun* and the *Sea of Stories*, David Lang’s *Modern Painters*, Terence Blanchard’s *Champion*, Tobias Picker’s *Dolores Claiborne*, and Bright Sheng’s *Dream of the Red Chamber*. As music director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for 12 years, he was honored four times by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his commitment to 20th century music.

Manahan was Music Director at New York City Opera for 14 seasons. His wide-ranging recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich’s *Tehillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas’s *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson’s *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker’s *Emmeline*.

Manahan continues his commitment to working with young musicians as Director of Orchestral Studies at the Manhattan School of Music as well as guest conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music. He also serves as Music Director of the Portland Opera.

**About American Composers Orchestra**

Founded in 1977 by a visionary group of artists and their supporters, 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, middle school through college composer education programs, and emerging composer development programs to foster a community of creators, audience, performers, collaborators, and funders. The organization serves as an incubator of ideas, research, and talent; as a catalyst for growth and change in the orchestral field; and as an advocate for American composers and their music.

ACO identifies and develops talent, performs established composers, champions those who are lesser-known, and increases regional, national, and international awareness of the infinite variety of American orchestral music, reflecting gender, racial, ethnic, geographic, stylistic, and age 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, Amazon, Spotify, and Apple Music.

ACO offers an array of programs for emerging composers including its own annual New Music Readings in New York City, which has served over 150 composers since its inception in 1991, and EarShot Readings, which since 2008 have been offered in partnership with orchestras across the country in collaboration with the League of American Orchestras, New Music USA and American Composers Forum. These Readings provide the rare opportunity for emerging composers to hear their original works played by a professional orchestra; the residencies, performances and composer-development programs speak directly to the orchestras’ communities and leverage local resources. Annually, ACO-produced Readings support 15-20 emerging composers, who receive mentorship and a professional orchestra reading and recording of their work. ACO’s New Music Readings in New York include a multi-performance commission awarded to the most promising participant through the Composing a New Orchestra Audience platform. Readings composers have gone on to win every major composition award, including the Pulitzer, Grammy, Grawemeyer, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Rome Prizes.

Since 1999, ACO has brought composers and musical teaching artists into New York City public schools through Sonic Spark (formerly known as Music Factory). Sonic Spark aims to leverage composition as a platform for creativity, and creativity as a platform for achievement in all areas of student’s life. 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 and college composers participate in hands-on composition classes, culminating in a performance of student compositions played by ACO’s professional musicians.

ACO has received numerous awards for its work, including those from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and from BMI recognizing the orchestra’s outstanding contribution to American music. ASCAP has awarded ACO its annual prize for adventurous programming 35 times, singling out ACO as “the orchestra that has done the most for new American music in the United States.” ACO received the inaugural MetLife Award for Excellence in Audience Engagement, and a proclamation from the New York City Council.
More information about American Composers Orchestra and resources about American orchestral composers is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

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American Composers Orchestra
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