



american composers orchestra

news release

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**American Composers Orchestra Honors Jon Deak, Jennifer Koh, Tania León, and Frederick Wertheim at 2019 Gala “Forces of Nature”**



**Wednesday, March 20, 2019**

**The Park, NYC | 118 10th Ave (between W. 17th & 18th Streets)**

**6:30pm Cocktails | 7:30pm Dinner and Performance**

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

New York, NY – On **Wednesday, March 20, 2019**, American Composers Orchestra (ACO) celebrates four individuals – true forces of nature – who have effected change in the American musical landscape at its annual Gala: **Jon Deak**, Founder & Artistic Director of New York Philharmonic’s Very Young Composers; violinist **Jennifer Koh**; composer and conductor **Tania León**; and **Frederick Wertheim**, ACO Board Chairman.

The honorary committee for the event consists of leaders and prominent supporters of the arts: **Alan and Arlene Alda**; **Deborah Borda** (President and CEO of the New York Philharmonic); **Philip Glass**; and **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** (Music Director of the Metropolitan Opera and the Philadelphia Orchestra) and **Pierre Tourville**. The gala committee includes ACO board members and supporters of this year’s honorees: Astrid and John Baumgardner; Dani Bedoni; Melanie and John Clarke; Donald Crawshaw and Matthew Hoffman; Sameera and Christian Troesch; and Midge Woolsey and Jerry Stolt.

The music program features tributes and musical selections spotlighting the honorees. **Missy Mazzoli’s** *Tooth and Nail* (2010) will be performed by honoree Jennifer Koh with Missy Mazzoli. This piece is part of Koh’s *Limitless* project, which explores the relationship between composer and performer through duo works played by Koh and the composers themselves. Musicians from ACO will perform *Alma* (2007) for flute and piano by honoree **Tania León**. *Alma* (meaning “soul” or “spirit” in Spanish) has elements of dancing rhythms, playfulness, dialogue, and jazz. In tribute to honoree **Jon Deak**, the program features two works by alums of New York Philharmonic’s Very

Young Composers, Julian Raheb and Che Buford. Originally an art song and heard here in a chamber version, *We Lived Happily During The War* (2018) by **Che Buford** (also an alum of ACO's Compose Yourself program) is set to Ilya Kaminsky's poem of the same title. The poem is a commentary on encountering American deception, and its people's lack of awareness, regarding the war, when he moved from Ukraine to America. *The Heat* by **Julian Raheb** was originally written for mezzo soprano and ensemble for a poem by Hilda Doolittle; it describes a feeling of overwhelming discomfort and wanting to break through the heat.

## **About the 2019 Honorees**

**Jon Deak** is Founder and Artistic Director of the Very Young Composers of the New York Philharmonic, an international, award-winning program he founded in 1995 in which children in grades 4–9 compose and orchestrate their own music to be performed by the New York Philharmonic and many other orchestras and ensembles. Under his leadership the New York Philharmonic has given more than 100 World Premieres of works written and orchestrated by children 13 years of age and under, and the program has spread to 60 locations on four continents. Also a prominent instrumentalist, Deak was Associate Principal Bass of the New York Philharmonic for many years. As a composer, he has written more than 300 works, and his music has been performed by orchestras such as the Chicago and National Symphony Orchestras and the New York Philharmonic. His Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra, *The Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1992. His music can also be heard on several television series and numerous recordings.

Violinist **Jennifer Koh** is recognized for intense, commanding performances, delivered with dazzling virtuosity and technical assurance. A forward-thinking artist, she is dedicated to exploring a broad and eclectic repertoire, while promoting diversity and inclusivity in classical music. She has expanded the contemporary violin repertoire through a wide range of commissioning projects, and has premiered more than 70 works written especially for her. Her quest for the new and unusual, sense of endless curiosity, and ability to lead and inspire a host of multidisciplinary collaborators, truly set her apart. Koh's critically acclaimed series include *The New American Concerto*, an ongoing, multi-season commissioning project that explores the form of the violin concerto and its potential for artistic engagement with contemporary societal concerns and issues through commissions from a diverse collective of composers; *Limitless* which explores the relationship between composer and performer through duo works played by Koh and the composers themselves; *Bridge to Beethoven*, in which she joins pianist Shai Wosner in pairing Beethoven's violin sonatas with new works inspired by them; *Bach and Beyond*, which traces the history of the solo violin repertoire from Bach's sonatas and partitas to pieces by 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century composers; and *Shared Madness*, comprising short works that explore virtuosity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, commissioned from over 30 composers. Named *Musical America's* 2016 Instrumentalist of the Year, Koh has won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Concert Artists Guild Competition, and an Avery Fisher Career Grant. She has a BA in English literature from Oberlin College and studied at the Curtis Institute, where she worked extensively with Jaime Laredo and Felix Galimir. She is the Artistic Director of *arco collaborative*, an artist-driven nonprofit that fosters a better understanding of our world through a musical dialogue inspired by ideas and the communities around us.

**Tania León**, (b. Havana, Cuba) is highly regarded as a composer and conductor and recognized for her accomplishments as an educator and advisor to arts organizations. She has been profiled on ABC, CBS, CNN, PBS, Univision, Telemundo, and independent films. She has been commissioned and performed by orchestras and new music ensembles across the United States and the world. Most recently she has been writing the opera, *The Little Rock Nine*, with a libretto by Thulani Davis, and historical research by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., commissioned by the University of Central Arkansas's College of Fine Arts and Communication. She has collaborated with authors and directors including John Ashbury, Margaret Atwood, Rita Dove, Jamaica Kincaid, Mark Lamos, Julie Taymor, and Derek Walcott. León has appeared as guest conductor with orchestras in France, Spain, Switzerland, Colombia, Mexico, South Africa, and the United States. A founding member of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, León instituted the Brooklyn Philharmonic Community Concert Series, co-founded the Sonidos de las Américas festivals with the American Composers Orchestra, and served as Latin American Advisor to the American Composers Orchestra and New Music Advisor to the New York Philharmonic. She is the founder and artistic director of Composers Now Festival and the Composers Now organization. A Professor at Brooklyn College since 1985 and at the Graduate Center of CUNY, she was named Distinguished Professor of the City University of New York in 2006. Honors and laureates include New York State Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award (1998), induction into the American

Academy of Arts and Letters (2010), a Grammy nomination and a Latin Grammy nomination (2012), the ASCAP Victor Herbert Award (2013), United States Artists Fellowship (2018), and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2018).

**Frederick Wertheim** is a partner in the international law firm Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, with a practice focused on the regulation of broker-dealers investment managers. He graduated from Harvard College, where he majored in music, in 1982 and then moved to Morocco to teach music at the American School of Tangier. The resulting insight into his limited capabilities as either a musician or a teacher led him two years later to New York University School of Law, where he was an editor of the law review, and he started at Sullivan & Cromwell upon graduation in 1987. Wertheim is also a member of the board of directors of Peoples' Symphony Concerts, which has presented concerts by renowned artists to audiences of limited means since 1900, and he was a founding board member of The Martina Arroyo Foundation, which provides comprehensive training for the performance of operas. He joined the ACO board in 2007 and has served as chair since 2015.

## **About the Composers**

**Che Buford** is a violinist and composer born in Brooklyn, New York in 2000. Buford started playing the violin at the age of 10 and started formally training in composition during his sophomore year of high school. He participated in the InterSchool Orchestra, The Usdan Center for the Creative & Performing Arts, The National Youth Orchestra II, The Juilliard MAP Program, The American Composers Orchestra Compose Yourself! program, and The Manhattan School of Music Pre-College. He has performed in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space and the Kimmel Center where he played alongside the Philadelphia Orchestra. Some career highlights include playing background for Grammy award winning artist Esperanza Spalding and having the New York Philharmonic perform his original composition, "If We Must Die" on their Young People's Concerts in 2018. Buford is currently on a full scholarship pursuing his BM in violin performance while studying composition at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

**Missy Mazzoli**, a leading woman on the contemporary music scene, composes music that inhabits an exquisite, mysterious, and "consistently inventive" (*New York Times*) sound-world that melds indie-rock sensibilities with formal training from Louis Andriessen, David Lang, Aaron Jay Kernis, Richard Ayres, and others. She is currently Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, where she is responsible not only for composing new works but for curating the adventurous Music Now series. Earlier this season she was named one of the first women in history to be commissioned by the century-old Metropolitan Opera, a glass-shattering milestone. Her music has a broad reach, having been performed by BBC Symphony, Kronos Quartet, JACK Quartet, Eighth Blackbird, LA Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Opera, Roomful of Teeth, and Opera Philadelphia, among others, and has been featured at numerous festivals including the BBC Proms, Bang on a Can Marathon, PROTOTYPE Festival, Ecstatic Music Festival, the Cabrillo Festival (Santa Cruz), and the Gaudeamus Festival (Amsterdam). She has garnered significant acclaim in recent years for her operas: *Breaking the Waves*---based on the eponymous and controversial Lars von Trier film and written with librettist Royce Vavrek--- was commissioned by Opera Philadelphia with Beth Morrison Productions and was both awarded the inaugural Award for Best New Opera by the Music Critics Association of North America and hailed as "among the best twenty-first-century American operas yet produced" by *Opera News*. Mazzoli and Vavrek's follow-up chamber opera, *Proving Up*, a cautionary tale centered around a post-Civil War family during Nebraska's land rush, was equally successful in DC, Omaha, and New York. Mazzoli is currently on the composition faculty of the Mannes College of Music, a division of the New School, and a co-founder of Luna Composition Lab, a mentorship program for young female-identifying composers with the Kaufman Center. An active pianist, Mazzoli performs with Victoire, an "all-star, all-female quintet" (*Time Out New York*) she founded, which is dedicated exclusively to her own compositions.

**Julian Raheb**, age 13, has been studying piano at the Brooklyn Conservatory since 2010. He won first place in the Hispanic Youth Showcase in 2017 at age 11, in 2015 at age 9, and in 2014 at age 8. The competitions are performed live to a panel of judges and an audience at NJPAC and broadcast to over 1.5 million worldwide viewers. On April 6, 2018, Raheb was featured as a composer/pianist on Fox 5 6pm News by 30-time Emmy Award winning anchor Ernie Anastos. On April 8, 2018, The Regina Opera Company premiered 3 of his compositions with Raheb playing piano. In April 2018, he was interviewed for a full-page feature in The Brooklyn Paper, The Park Slope Courier and other newspapers. Julian performs at many gala events including Rutgers

University for the 250th anniversary, the 30th Anniversary of the Hispanic Youth Showcase, the 80th anniversary of Goya Foods and Newark Public Library for the 350th anniversary of the City of Newark, attended by NJ mayors, US Senators, UN Ambassadors, and members of congress. At age 9, Raheb was chosen to participate in the NY Philharmonic's Very Young Composers Program, under Jon Deak. He has composed for many ensembles and is working on a piece for full orchestra. Raheb is a talented visual artist and for 3 years in a row, has won a city-wide, 6th to 12th grade school competition sponsored by Art Connection (2016, 2017 and 2018). His works are on display at midtown Hedge Fund offices.

## Upcoming ACO Concert Details

**Thursday, April 11, 2019 at 7:30pm: *Where We Lost Our Shadows***

Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall | 57th St. and 7th Ave., NYC

Tickets & Information: [www.carnegiehall.org](http://www.carnegiehall.org)

George Manahan, music director and conductor

Helga Davis, vocalist

Ali Sethi, vocalist

Shayna Dunkelman, percussion

Khaled Jarrar, videographer

MORTON FELDMAN: *Turfan Fragments* (1980)

GLORIA COATES: *Symphony No. 1, "Music on Open Strings"* (1973)

DU YUN: *Where We Lost Our Shadows* (N.Y. Premiere, co-commissioned by ACO, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Southbank Centre, and Cal Performances)

ACO's next concert at Carnegie Hall will be **April 11, 2019**. The orchestra will give the U.S. premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winner **Du Yun's** and visual artist Khaled Jarrar's *Where We Lost Our Shadows*, a new multidisciplinary work for orchestra, film, and vocalists, co-commissioned by ACO, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, Southbank Centre, and Cal Performances and supported by **ACO's Commission Club**. This is ACO's second commission from Du Yun, who created her piece *Slow Portraits* during ACO's coLABoratory research and development program in 2013. Du Yun and Jarrar are creating *Where We Lost Our Shadows* in response to film captured by Ramallah-based Palestinian visual artist **Khaled Jarrar**, which documents the refugee crisis in Europe. The piece will be performed by ACO with singer **Helga Davis**, Pakistani Qawwali singer **Ali Sethi**, and percussionist **Shayna Dunkelman**, with visuals by Jarrar. The concert also includes **Gloria Coates' Symphony No. 1, "Music on Open Strings,"** from 1973, and **Morton Feldman's** 1980 work *Turfan Fragments*, inspired by a series of fragments of knotted carpets from the third and sixth centuries which were discovered in the Silk Road region.

## About ACO

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.

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.

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.

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](http://www.americancomposers.org/press-media)*

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