

## American Composers Orchestra Announces Online Summer Composition Programs for Middle School, High School, and College Students

Plus Sonic Spark Sings Video Collection on YouTube



July 7 to August 27, 2020 | Registration Deadline June 26, 2020

### Sonic Spark Lab | Compose Yourself!

New York, NY – This summer, **American Composers Orchestra (ACO)** is offering its **Sonic Spark** education programs through distance learning online. ACO's Sonic Spark programs use composition as a platform to unlock students' creativity, and creativity as a platform for achievement in academic and social areas. Two of the courses – **Sonic Spark Lab** for middle school students and **Compose Yourself!** for high school students – will take place on Zoom in July and August. The sessions are taught by ACO Education Director **Kevin James**, ACO Teaching Artists, and guest composers. Registered students come from many of New York City's youth organizations and schools including Orchestra of St. Luke's Youth Orchestra; Harlem School of the Arts; Kaufman Music Center's Lucy Moses School, Special Music School and Face the Music; as well as from Frank Sinatra High School of the Arts, Brooklyn High School of the Arts, and Talent Unlimited High School.

ACO's **Sonic Spark Lab** is a project-based music composition class for middle school students with an interest in music creation in any and all genres. It aims to foster curiosity and self-expression through music and interdisciplinary arts, while breaking down perceived barriers of what it means to be a composer. Sonic Spark Lab was piloted at Harlem School of the Arts last year. This is the first time that registration has been offered to the public. Registration is open until June 26 at <http://bit.ly/SSLsummer20>

Throughout the six-week period of Sonic Spark Lab, which begins on July 7 and runs until August 14, students will collaborate with classmates to develop an original project from start to finish, meeting twice weekly. The students will meet all together and in smaller breakout sessions online led by Kevin James along with ACO Teaching Artists **JL Marlor, Nick Dunston, and Mary Prescott**. The course will culminate in a final presentation of the new works.

Founded in 2012, ACO's **Compose Yourself!**, which runs from August 3 to August 24, guides high school students with composition experience and has a track record of preparing its students for the rigors of conservatory training and beyond. Over the course of three weeks, the Compose Yourself Summer Composers Intensive offers six seminar-style sessions designed to help young composers develop positive approaches to creativity, learn professional standards of notation, and develop strong orchestration technique in a supportive, hands-on environment.

Students will develop an original ensemble piece from start to finish throughout the workshops, led by Kevin James and renowned guest composers. Compose Yourself!'s theme this summer is antiphonal music, to accommodate the possibility of a properly socially distanced live reading session, which will be recorded for the students' portfolios. Registration is open until June 26 at <http://bit.ly/CYsummer20>

In order to reach composers at all educational levels, ACO's **Compose Yourself! PRO** will run concurrently with the Compose Yourself! Summer Composers Intensive in August. Compose Yourself! PRO is for college level composers with ambitions to compose professionally or composers nearing the onset of their careers. It is designed to help these early career composers to raise the level of their craft and guide their pursuit of creativity, innovation, and an individual "voice," while teaching some of the basics of self-producing, career preparation, and career development.

ACO has also published a collection of free instructional videos on YouTube covering a wide range of topics, available [here](#). One example, **Build a Song from Just Your Voice** (aka **Sonic Spark Sings**) is a great introduction to identifying and creating the different sounds and components that go into a song and is suitable for students or adults of any age and experience level. Presented by ACO Teaching Artist JL Marlor in a four-part set, these videos demonstrate simple free software to create harmonies with looping and layering, how to make the sounds of beat-boxing to create rhythms, and how to finish it all off with a strong melody.

## About American Composers Orchestra

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, 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, 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.com, Amazon.com and iTunes.

In addition to the Underwood New Music Readings in NYC, EarShot enables orchestras across the country to identify talented young composers. With guidance from ACO, partner orchestras – such as the Detroit Symphony, the Sarasota (FL) Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra – undertake readings, residencies, performances and composer-development programs that speak directly to their communities and leverage local resources.

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.

More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at [www.americancomposers.org](http://www.americancomposers.org).

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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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