



EARSHOT

Program Guide

OVERVIEW

EarShot is the nation's first ongoing, systematic program for cultivating relationships between orchestras and composers.

A national network of new music readings and composer development programs, EarShot identifies fresh voices reflective of the rich stylistic and cultural diversity present in communities across the country. The program is completely customizable; activities are focused to serve each orchestra's programmatic goals and community-defined vision.

EarShot is a program of the American Composers Orchestra, in partnership with American Composers Forum, the League of American Orchestras, and New Music USA.

VIDEO: EarShot Readings
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
May 2023



BENEFITS

Discover Rising Talent

ACO's broad and inclusive recruitment efforts identify and cultivate a strong talent pool aligned with each orchestra's programming goals and priorities

Engage Your Donors

EarShot creates new opportunities for philanthropic support, including readings, commissions, educational programs, and cultivation events

Develop New Audiences

ACO staff works hand-in-hand with partner orchestras to design educational programming and community-focused events as an extension of EarShot readings

Extend Your Reach

At a fraction of the cost of building an in-house recruitment and readings program, ACO has a proven track record of identifying composers whose work expands the definition of American orchestral music

EARSHOT HIGHLIGHTS

Our 2022–23 season of EarShot Readings supported **twenty mid-career composers**, bringing the total number of composers supported through EarShot to **nearly 400**. The season featured collaborations with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Naples Philharmonic, Next Festival of Emerging Artists, and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, in addition to our own orchestra in New York City.

Highlighting the diversity of composers across the Americas is central to our work; 90% of our 2022–23 participants self-identified as BIPOC and 60% self-identified as women/non-binary/gendervoid. We were thrilled for EarShot Readings to be featured in recent articles by Atlanta's [EarRelevant](#) as well as the [Dallas Morning News](#).

Featured Composer Brittany J. Green, ACO EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Alfred Kan.



EARSHOT OUTCOMES

Each reading generates 3–6 high-level orchestral works from early to mid-career composers, aligned with programmatic priorities.

Composer-orchestra relationships extend beyond the EarShot readings. On average, 1–2 works by participating EarShot emerging composers are programmed on a future concert by partner orchestras; many orchestras commission new works from one or more of the participant composers.

Past participants indicate that EarShot is a defining moment in their early careers, jumpstarting relationships with professionals in the field and building artistic and civic practice skills towards future commissions and residencies.

Mentor Xi Wang and Featured Composer Iván Enrique Rodríguez, Dallas Symphony Orchestra EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Leo Aguilar.



PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- National call for scores, identifying orchestral composers who have had two or fewer pieces performed by professional orchestras via ACO's vast network of artists and institutional partnerships
- ACO-led preparation of scores, in partnership with copyists and partner orchestras' librarians
- 2-3 reading services with the orchestra, selected composers, and established mentor composers
- Opportunities for feedback from orchestra musicians, librarian, and conductor, leading to score revisions
- Relationship building and professional development opportunities
- Composer-led activities in community spaces and educational settings
- A pipeline to extended commissioning opportunities via ACO and the League of American Orchestras

Featured Composer Amy Nam, ACO EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Alfred Kan.



ACO PROVIDES

- Travel to EarShot partner orchestra city/venue, lodging, and ground transit
- Facilitation of EarShot applications including call for scores, processing of submitted materials, and administering the panel of composers and conductors to review and adjudicate submissions
- Collection and review of all orchestral materials for selected works to ensure scores and parts are of a professional quality
- Professional development workshops with mentors and industry leaders for participating composers
- Communication with EarShot partners including the American Composers Orchestra, League of American Orchestras, American Composers Forum, and New Music USA
- Materials in support of publicity, promotions, and program for the event
- A detailed production schedule and optimal timeline
- 1-2 staff members to facilitate readings and feedback sessions
- Public speaking training and other professional development workshops
- Collaboration with orchestra staff in engaging donors and planning events for supporters and community partners
- Post-reading access to support for commissioning and consortia

Conductor Jerry Hou and Featured Composers Alyssa Regent and Ahmed Al Abaca, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra EarShot Readings, May 2023.



PARTNER ORCHESTRA PROVIDES

- Two or more orchestral services, preferably on consecutive days
- Conductor
- Venue for readings and recording session
- Final decision on featured artists/composers
- Catering for working meals while in session during the residency period
- One group dinner and group outing for featured artists, mentors, and EarShot staff
- At least one quality recording of each featured artist's submitted work, made available for each featured artist's personal use and for online streaming
- Library support for preparation and dissemination of parts and scores and return of performance materials to each featured artist
- Pre-/post-event feedback sessions with conductor and musician liaisons
- Commitment to commission one of the final participant composers for a future performance

*Mentors and Featured Composers, Dallas Symphony Orchestra
EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Leo Aguilar.*



“The 2023 ACO EarShot readings provided an unparalleled opportunity for my career. The learning experience provided by hearing a full orchestra of this caliber playing my music, combined with feedback from an acclaimed conductor and brilliant mentors, simply cannot be substituted. All of my future music will be stronger because of this experience.”

– Amy Nam, ACO EarShot Composer (2023)



Featured Composers, Mentor Composers, and ACO staff, ACO EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Alfred Kan.

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CASE STUDY

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Side-by-Side
Educational Programming

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra integrated their Education department with the EarShot readings in 2019. Three days before the readings, the chosen participant composers worked alongside ACO Education Director Kevin James, guest artist Jessie Montgomery, and DSO Teaching Artists to create and implement learning modules for students K-12 in local public schools. The learning modules presented at the local schools used the music that the composers had written for the readings to teach concepts of rhythm, improvisation, and harmony.

OUTCOMES



Detroit Symphony Orchestra EarShot Education 2019. Photo by Aiden Feltkamp.

Reached 500 students and 40 adult educators in one day

Solidified partnerships with local public schools

Built relationships with four Black orchestral composers

“EarShot Education was an energizing whirlwind of a weekend that proved to me that beyond the art we create, one of the most useful and powerful skills we as artists can develop is the ability to articulate what we do for audiences of all backgrounds.”

**– EarShot Detroit Participant
Composer (2019)**



Detroit Symphony Orchestra EarShot Education, 2019. Photo by Aiden Feltkamp.

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CASE STUDY

Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra

Building Community through
ArtPrize

Grand Rapids Symphony planned their EarShot readings amidst the city's 2018 ArtPrize festival. ArtPrize is an annual, eighteen-day international art competition which takes place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Symphony closed the reading rehearsals to the public but performed the works four times as part of the ArtPrize competition. The widely publicized performances were held in an art museum that was open to the street with speakers amplifying the orchestra's music on the sidewalk, encouraging passersby to come in and participate. The readings consisted of two rehearsals and four short concerts (for a total of four services), and spanned five days.

OUTCOMES



Grand Rapids Symphony EarShot Readings, 2018. Photo by Aiden Feltkamp.

Over 2,000 new contacts added to symphony's mailing list

Commissioned new work from a participating composer

Work by a participating composer won an ArtPrize award

"The EarShot Readings in Naples, Florida have totally exceeded my expectations! I was amazed at how seriously the conductor, orchestra, and mentor composers approached my work, and how well I was taken care of by the ACO Staff. I am immensely grateful to the ACO and Naples Philharmonic for including me in the EarShot Readings."

– Meilina Tsui, EarShot Naples Participant Composer (2023)



Featured Composers, Mentor Composers, and ACO staff, Naples Philharmonic EarShot Readings, May 2023.

ALUMNI

Selected Earshot Alumni

- Julia Adolphe
- Andy Akiho
- Lembit Beecher
- Courtney Bryan
- inti figgis-vizueta
- Saad Haddad
- Jennifer Higdon
- Jonathan Bailey Holland
- Niloufar Iravani
- Han Lash
- Nicole Mitchell
- Dawn Norfleet
- Gity Razaz
- Carlos Simon

Selected Earshot Partner Orchestras

- Aguascalientes Symphony Orchestra
- Berkeley Symphony
- Buffalo Philharmonic
- Colorado Symphony
- Detroit Symphony Orchestra
- Grand Rapids Symphony
- Jacksonville Symphony
- Memphis Symphony Orchestra
- Nashville Symphony
- New York Philharmonic
- San Diego Symphony
- Houston Symphony
- Oregon Symphony
- Tucson Symphony

OUR SUPPORTERS

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*Featured Composer Michael R. Dudley Jr., Next Festival of Emerging Artists
EarShot Readings, June 2023. Photo by Alfred Kan.*



LET'S TALK

EMAIL

Loki Karuna, Director of Artist Equity

loki@americancomposers.org

WEBSITE

www.americancomposers.org