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## AMERICAN MUSIC CENTER HONORS LUMINARIES IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN MUSIC

The American Music Center is extremely pleased to announce the following recipients of its 2010 Awards.

*AMC's Founders Award:*

Francis Thorne

*AMC's Letter of Distinction:*

Jack Beeson

Fred Ho

Meredith Monk

Esa-Pekka Salonen

Society for New Music

*AMC's Trailblazer Award:*

**International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)**

(Biographies of the 2010 honorees follow.)

"Each year, we are proud to honor those who have given so much of their talent and passion to this industry," AMC President and CEO Joanne Hubbard Cossa comments. "This illustrious group of composers and performers truly exemplifies the diversity and extraordinary abilities of those championing new American music today, and each winner has made an extraordinary contribution to the world of contemporary music in this country."

She continues, "We are extremely proud to honor Francis Thorne with our *Founders Award*. Not only have his compositions had a lasting impact on new American music, but his co-founding of the American Composers Orchestra some thirty-five years ago advanced the field enormously.

*more*

"Those receiving *Letters of Distinction* — Jack Beeson, Fred Ho, Meredith Monk, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Society for New Music — have left their mark on the new American musical landscape in five very different ways. Collectively they have served the community as composers, performers, mentors, teachers and music advocates. Their contributions to the field are diverse and unparalleled."

"Lastly," she concludes, "the commitment, style and fresh new look International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) brings to new American music makes them the perfect recipient for our *Trailblazer Award*."

### **AMC Awards: History and Descriptions**

Since 1964, the American Music Center has annually awarded the **Letter of Distinction** to recognize those who have made a significant contribution to the field of contemporary American music. This year's Letter of Distinction recipients join a celebrated group of individuals and organizations who have received this honor, including George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, Joan Tower, Merce Cunningham, Morton Feldman, Laurie Anderson, Dizzy Gillespie, Steve Reich, Michael Tilson Thomas, Virgil Thomson, Joan La Barbara, Randy Weston, the Kronos Quartet, Bang on a Can, Dawn Upshaw, and the American Composers Orchestra.

The **Founders Award**, established in 1999, is named in honor of the six founders of the American Music Center: Aaron Copland, Howard Hansen, Marion Bauer, Otto Luening, Quincy Porter and Harrison Kerr. It celebrates lifetime achievement in the field of new American music. Previous winners include: Elliott Carter, Lou Harrison, Milton Babbitt, and Steve Reich. Last year's honoree was Gunther Schuller.

The **Trailblazer Award**, instituted in 2003, honors those deserving of commendation and support from the American contemporary music community for their early and mid-career efforts toward championing new music. Previous winners have included Matt Haimovitz, eighth blackbird, and Derek Bermel.

Awards will be presented on Monday, May 3, 2010, at the Chelsea Art Museum in New York City from 5-7pm to an audience of American Music Center members and guests.

## BIOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN MUSIC CENTER HONOREES – 2010

### FRANCIS THORNE

Francis Thorne embraced his passion for composition after a varied career as a naval officer, banker, stockbroker, and jazz pianist. Born into a musical family, the young Thorne studied composition at Yale, but after graduation he entered the Navy to serve in WWII. Following the end of the war, he pursued a career on Wall Street. It wasn't until the mid-1950s that he decided to return to music and he began performing as a jazz pianist. After hearing Thorne play, Duke Ellington recommended him to the famed Hickory House jazz club where he landed a two-year engagement. In 1958, Thorne moved his family to Italy to study privately with David Diamond and develop the craftsmanship that would set his music apart with its distinctive interweaving of jazz and classical forms. Thorne's first orchestral success, *Elegy for Orchestra*—premiered by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1964—came at the age of 42. With jazz as an ever-present influence, Thorne's eclectic tastes led to his groundbreaking and genre-bending 1968 composition, *Sonar Plexus*, for electric guitar and orchestra. Since then, Thorne has been the recipient of numerous commissions and awards, from such organizations as the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Today his catalogue includes over 117 works in every genre, ranging from intimate songs and piano pieces to operas, three piano concertos, and seven symphonies. In addition to his activities as a composer, Thorne has advocated for American music through his career-long participation on boards of new music and composer service organizations, including the American Composers Orchestra, which he co-founded with Dennis Russell Davies and Paul Lustig Dunkel and which is now in its 33rd season.

### JACK BEESON

Jack Beeson was born in 1921 in Muncie IN and began piano lessons at the age of 7, soon additionally studying clarinet, xylophone, and composition. Seduced by the Metropolitan Opera's first broadcasts, Beeson spent his teenage years atypically—writing three libretti while also attempting to set some scenes to music. He attended the Eastman School of Music, majoring in composition (while continuing piano and cello studies), where he earned Bachelor and Master degrees. Beeson interrupted his Doctoral work to go to New York City to study with Béla Bartók, who—six months later—unfortunately became too ill to work with the young composer. By that time, Beeson had become the coach and assistant conductor of the Columbia University Opera Workshop, where he was integrally involved with annual productions of premieres of works by American composers. He remained at Columbia for 50 years, teaching and mentoring some 300 graduate students. For 22 years, he has also served as the MacDowell Professor Emeritus of Music. Throughout his career, Beeson's commitment to new music included serving on the boards of many organizations which support American composers; he is still actively involved with ASCAP and the Ditson Fund. Beeson's composition catalogue is extensive, comprising works for orchestra, band, and chamber ensemble. However, his main output has been vocal music, including songs, choral pieces, and ten operas, among them *Hello Out There* and *Lizzie Borden* which have both been widely performed as well as televised in the United States and abroad. In 2008, Edwin Mellen Press published his autobiography, *How Operas Are Created by Composers and Librettists: The Life of Jack Beeson, American Opera Composer*.

### FRED HO

Fred Ho—composer, baritone saxophonist, producer, playwright, author, and social activist—is the leader of the Afro Asian Music Ensemble (sextet), the Green Monster Big Band (a 21 piece chamber orchestra), the Monkey Orchestra (a unique chamber ensemble/big band comprised of traditional Chinese and western instrumentation and Chinese language vocals), Caliente: Circle Around the Sun (duet with poet Magdalena Gomez), the Afro Asian Scientific Soul Duo (with tenor saxophonist Salim Washington), and the Saxophone Liberation Front (a saxophone quartet). An assertive but affirmational political agenda is the cornerstone of all of the music of Fred Ho, who earned a degree in sociology from Harvard University but is a self-taught musician and composer. For over two decades, Ho's insight has presciently embraced 21st century multiculturalism with his intricate and soulful amalgamation of a number of musical traditions spanning musical theatre, African American and traditional Chinese folk music. Described as both brilliant and chaotic, Ho's music "is neither easily pigeonholed nor easily ignored." (Washington Post) His output encompasses solos and compositions for his own ensembles, orchestral pieces, operas and music/theater epics,

multimedia performance works, martial arts ballets, and oratorios. His opera, *A Chinaman's Chance*, which received its premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, was the first contemporary Chinese-American opera. Ho has been honored with numerous commissions and awards, most recently receiving the 2009 Harvard Arts Medal. He was also named the first Asian American recipient of the Duke Ellington Distinguished Artist Lifetime Achievement Award from the Black Musicians Conference.

### **MEREDITH MONK**

Meredith Monk is a composer, singer, choreographer, filmmaker, and creator of new opera and music theater works. During a career spanning five decades, Monk has been acclaimed by audiences and critics as a major creative force. A pioneer in what is now called "extended vocal technique" and "interdisciplinary performance," Monk has been hailed as a "magician of the voice," and "one of America's coolest composers." In 1965, she began her innovative exploration of the voice as a multi-faceted instrument and subsequently composed and performed many solo pieces for unaccompanied voice and voice/keyboard. In 1978, she formed Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble to further expand her musical textures and forms. Her vocal music is an eloquent language in and of itself which expands the boundaries of musical composition, creating landscapes of sound that unearth feelings, energies, and memories for which there are no words. In addition to her groundbreaking vocal and theater pieces (which include *Book of Days*, *Dolmen Music*, *Mercy*, *Impermanence*, and *ATLAS*), Monk has created vital new repertoire for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. Her music has also appeared in motion pictures by Jean-Luc Godard and the Coen Brothers, among others. Celebrated internationally, her music has been presented by the Lincoln Center Festival, Houston Grand Opera, London's Barbican Center, and at major venues in countries from Brazil to Syria. Monk's most recent work, composed for chamber orchestra, chorus and two vocal soloists, was premiered in March by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. With a discography featuring over a dozen recordings, Monk's numerous honors include induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, receiving a MacArthur Award and being named a United States Artists Fellow.

### **ESA-PEKKA SALONEN**

Esa-Pekka Salonen is renowned both for his striking compositions and his illuminating interpretations of contemporary music. The Helsinki-born Salonen has led countless premieres of new works since his arrival in the United States in 1992 to serve as Music Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic—a position he held until 2009. (He is now Conductor Laureate.) A champion of American composers, he has conducted world premieres of works by John Adams, William Kraft, Bernard Rands, Steven Stucky, Tan Dun, and Augusta Read Thomas, among others, and has recorded major works by John Corigliano, Bernard Herrmann, and Wynton Marsalis. He has also introduced American audiences to works by some of the most respected international composers, including Franco Donatoni, Anders Hillborg, Magnus Lindberg, Witold Lutoslawski, Kaija Saariaho, and Rodion Shchedrin. Being such a strong advocate for the music of other composers initially made it difficult for Salonen to have time to work on his own compositions, but in recent years he has been able to take time off from his demanding conducting schedule to actively compose large-scale works, many of which have been inspired by his adopted California homeland. *LA Variations*, commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, had a triumphant premiere in January 1997 and has since proven to be one of the most popular orchestral works of recent decades. *Wing on Wing*, a 2004 score for two sopranos and orchestra inspired by Frank Gehry's remarkable architecture for Walt Disney Concert Hall, has also been highly successful both in the United States and abroad. His 2009 Violin Concerto for Leila Josefowicz has recently toured Europe and will be performed as the score for a new ballet danced by the New York City Ballet this June.

### **SOCIETY FOR NEW MUSIC**

Since its founding in 1971, Society for New Music (SNM) has served the central New York State community by bringing new music to a broad audience throughout the region. Founding members Neva Pilgrim, Ralph D'Mello, and Greg Levin have successfully guided the Society's growth as it has become a driving cultural force for contemporary music in the United States through its commissioning activities, performances, recordings, and other initiatives. SNM commissions at least one new work each season, has produced four recordings including a CD featuring its commissioned works, and hosts the Cazenovia Counterpoint summer festival. As New York State's only year-round new music organization outside of Manhattan, SNM provides a

format for living composers in the same way art galleries offer a platform for visual artists. It presents multiple opportunities for audiences of all ages to become conversant with the music of their time and strives to feature diverse styles of contemporary works. Originally offering five performances a year, SNM's programming has grown to approximately 25 concerts per season, with additional workshops and master classes. It also funds composer-residencies in inner-city schools. SNM has offered opportunities to composers across a wide career spectrum, prominently featuring regional composers alongside nationally-known composers. They have also brought new music beyond the concert hall through their cable TV concerts as well as on their weekly hour-long new music radio program, "Fresh Ink," which airs on several local stations in the region and is also accessible throughout the world via the website of Central New York's public broadcasting station WCNY. The Society has previously been honored with ASCAP/Chamber Music America Awards, the American Composer Alliance's 'Laurel Leaf' Award, and a New York State Governor's Arts Award.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE (ICE)**

Founded in 2001, the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) has established itself as one of the leading new-music ensembles and organizations of its generation, performing over 50 concerts a year in the United States and abroad. With a roster of 30 of the country's most accomplished young musicians and a staff of visionary arts entrepreneurs, ICE functions as performer, presenter, and educator, advancing the music of our time by commissioning and performing new works and by developing groundbreaking strategies for audience engagement. In an era of increasingly diverse audiences, changes in arts education, new patronage models, and rapidly shifting musical genres, ICE redefines concert music as it brings together new works and new listeners. ICE emphasizes inter-disciplinary collaborations (including multimedia and dance) and active commissioning of both unknown and established composers. Over the course of its short history, ICE has already given over 400 world premieres and has issued several critically acclaimed recordings on the Bridge, Naxos, and New Focus labels. Forthcoming 2010 releases include albums for New Amsterdam, Nonesuch, Mode, and Tzadik. Along with its concerts at major world venues, ICE also presents performances in non-traditional venues and has self-produced eight large-scale contemporary music festivals in settings as wide-ranging as nightclubs, galleries, and public spaces, many of which are free and open to the public.

The **American Music Center** is dedicated to building a national community of artists, organizations, and audiences, creating, performing, and enjoying new American music. Since its founding in 1939, AMC has been a leader in providing field-wide advocacy, support, and connection. AMC **advocates** for the community through its media programming; **supports** the community by making grants to composers and ensembles each year, and by offering professional development services to artists; and **connects** the community with an array of information services designed to facilitate performances, including a vast, searchable online database of 50,000 American works by over 6,000 composers, publications compiling opportunities in new music and other information useful to industry professionals, and benefits and services for nearly 2,500 members in all 50 states and around the world.

## Historical List of American Music Center Award Recipients

### *Founders Award*

2010 Francis Thorne  
2009 Gunther Schuller  
2008 Steve Reich  
2007 Philip Glass  
2006 Milton Babbitt  
2005 William "Count" Basie (posthumous); Charles Ives (posthumous)  
2004 Ornette Coleman  
2003 Betty Freeman; Lou Harrison (in memoriam)  
2001 John Duffy  
1999 Elliott Carter

### *Trailblazer Award*

2010 International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE)  
2008 Derek Bermel  
2007 eighth blackbird  
2005 The Minnesota Commissioning Club  
2004 Matt Haimovitz  
2003 George Steel/Miller Theatre

### *New Music Educator Award*

2009 New World Symphony  
2007 Charles Hamm

### *Letter of Distinction*

2010 Jack Beeson; Fred Ho; Meredith Monk; Esa-Pekka Salonen; Society for New Music  
2009 La Monte Young; Albany Records  
2008 Robert Ashley; Joan La Barbara; Edgar Meyer; Ned Rorem; Joan Tower  
2007 Marin Alsop; T.J. Anderson; John Corigliano; Ralph Jackson; Terry Riley  
2006 Chanticleer; Bill Frisell; Alex Ross; Billy Taylor  
2005 Laurie Anderson; Lukas Foss; Ahmad Jamal; Richard Kessler; Gian Carlo Menotti; The Other Minds Festival; Frances Richard  
2004 John Adams; Art Ensemble of Chicago; Dave Brubeck; Ben Johnston; George Perle; Stephen Sondheim; Dawn Upshaw; Yale Oral History of American Music/Vivian Perlis  
2003 George Crumb; Ronald Freed (in memoriam); Kyle Gann; Steve Reich; Wayne Shorter  
2002 Henry Cowell (in memoriam); Phyllis Curtin; Sylvia Goldstein, Ursula Oppens, John Schaefer  
2001 Donald Erb; Hale Smith; Mark Swed; Lyn Austin (in memoriam); Teresa Sterne (in memoriam)  
2000 Composers Recordings, Inc.; John Harbison; Robert Hurwitz; K. Robert Schwarz (in memoriam); Michael Tilson Thomas  
1999 Ellis Freedman; Philip Glass; California EAR Unit; Harvey Lichtenstein; Mel Powell (in memoriam)  
1998 Arnold Broido; Yo-Yo Ma; George Walker; Bette Snapp (in memoriam)  
1997 Merce Cunningham; Tania Leon; Paul Sperry; Jacob Druckman (in memoriam)  
1996 Earle Brown; Thomas Buckner; Randy Weston; Ulysses Kay (in memoriam)  
1995 Ed London and the Cleveland Chamber Symphony; Max Roach; Gregg Smith  
1994 David Baker; Arthur Cohn; Francis Goelet  
1993 Morton Gould; Modern Jazz Quartet; Dizzy Gillespie (in memoriam); Stephen Albert (in memoriam)  
1992 (none awarded due to schedule change)  
1991 Bang on a Can; New World Records; Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust  
1990 Muhal Richard Abrams; Pauline Oliveros; Lawrence Leighton Smith and the Louisville Orchestra  
1989 Leo Ornstein; Minna Lederman Daniels; and Jan DeGaetani (in memoriam)  
1988 Cecil Taylor; Sylvia Smith and Smith Publications; Peter Garland and Soundings Press  
1987 Ornette Coleman; Kronos Quartet; Morton Feldman (in memoriam); Vincent Persichetti (in memoriam)

1986 Lou Harrison; Betty Freeman  
1985 Gunther Schuller; Margaret Jory (in memoriam); Leonard Fleischer of Exxon, Howard Klein of the Rockefeller Foundation, and Frank Hodsoll of the National Endowment for the Arts for the Meet the Composer Orchestra Residencies Program  
1984 Milton Babbitt; KPFA/Charles Amirkhanian; St. Louis Symphony/Leonard Slatkin  
1983 Robert Erickson; C.F. Peters Corporation/Evelyn Hinrichsen; Paul Jacobs (in memoriam)  
1982 Henry Brant; Institute for Studies in American Music/H. Wiley Hitchcock, founding director; Robert Miller (in memoriam)  
1981 Conlon Nancarrow; American Composers Orchestra/Francis Thorne, Dennis Russell Davies  
1980 Meet the Composer/John Duffy; Samuel Barber  
1979 John Cage; Lawrence Morton  
1978 Leonard Bernstein; Nicolas Slonimsky  
1977 Hugo Weisgall; Martin Bookspan  
1976 Virgil Thomson; Paul Fromm  
1975 Aaron Copland; Otto Luening  
1974 Koussevitsky Foundation; Olga Koussevitsky  
1973 Elliott Carter; Roy Harris  
1972 Hugo Weisgall; Max Pollikoff  
1971 Howard Hanson; Roger Sessions  
1970 Aaron Copland; Leopold Stokowski; Benjamin Steinberg  
1969 Stefan Wolpe; George Balanchine; Samuel Rosenbaum  
1968 Roger Sessions; Alberto Ginestera  
1967 William Schuman  
1965 Adele Addison; Milton Feist; Henry Allen Moe; Thomas Scherman  
1964 Claire Reis; Donald Engle; Richard Franko Goldman; Virgil Thomson

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