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For Immediate Release

**PACIFIC SYMPHONY'S 11TH AMERICAN COMPOSERS FESTIVAL  
EMBRACES ITS PERSIAN-AMERICAN NEIGHBORS AND  
CELEBRATES THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR, NOWRUZ**

*Led by Music Director Carl St. Clair and presented in collaboration with Farhang Foundation, the festival's highlights include the Shams Ensemble, soprano Hila Plitmann, conductor Farhad Mechkat, Pacific Chorale and a world premiere by composer-in-residence Richard Danielpour*

*Concerts take place March 22-27 in the  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall*

*Some ACF performances are part of Music Unwound exploring  
engaging new formats and thematic programming*

**Orange County, Calif.—Jan. 30, 2012**—Pacific Symphony, in its ongoing quest to discover new musical landscapes through its acclaimed American Composers Festival (ACF), this year celebrates the Iranian New Year festival of Nowruz, which marks the arrival of spring and has been celebrated since ancient times. Presented in collaboration with Farhang Foundation, the festival, led by Music Director Carl St. Clair, takes place March 22-27, and explores the music of Persian-Americans through three programs featuring authentic Persian music. Guest artists include the highly acclaimed Shams Ensemble, Grammy Award-winning soprano Hila Plitmann; Iran's best-known and most acclaimed conductor Farhad Mechkat and Orange County's stellar Pacific Chorale. Among the highlights is a world premiere by one of today's reining composers, Richard Danielpour, whose own Persian ancestry served as inspiration for his oratorio, "Toward a Season of Peace," commissioned by Pacific Symphony specifically for this occasion.

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Three ACF concerts are part of Music Unwound (an innovative series that utilizes varied formats and thematic programming to contextualize music) and include activities in the lobby pre-concert. Among these is a demonstration of a Nowruz ceremonial table, called *Haft Sin*. Traditionally *Haft Sin* has been explained as a table that includes seven things whose names start with the Persian letter “Sin.” For tickets or more information on ACF 2012, call (714) 755-5799 or visit [www.PacificSymphony.org/ACF](http://www.PacificSymphony.org/ACF). ACF 2012 is co-sponsored by Farhang Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Media sponsors include KUSC, KPCC, KCRW and KIRN. (Please find more details and pricing for the individual concerts below, as well as information on Music Unwound.)

“Farhang Foundation is pleased to partner with Pacific Symphony to mark the occasion of Nowruz, which celebrates the arrival of spring and rebirth of nature,” says Bitá Milanian, Farhang Foundation’s executive director. “We are especially delighted to share this cherished tradition as part of the American Composers Festival 2012, featuring world-class musical talents, in what is sure to be an enchanting blend of East and West.”

The festival includes the enthralling Shams Ensemble, a highly popular group from Iran, which draws its inspiration from traditional Kurdish, Sufi and classical Iranian music. The group creates its mesmerizing music with the help of the *tanbour* (the Kurdish lute), *daf* (frame drum) and percussion instruments. Also joining the Symphony is Tehran Symphony Orchestra’s Music Director Mechkat—who is also a critically acclaimed composer, musical virtuoso and winner of the prestigious Dmitri Mitropoulos International Competition for Young Conductors.

“For many years now we have been striving to embrace Orange County’s rich and diverse communities through contextual programming,” says Maestro St.Clair. “This is a way to connect on a more personal level and also reflects my own wish to enrich lives through the beauty and power of music.

As one of the most ancient and important festivals of Persian heritage, the Nowruz New Year celebration symbolizes the vitality of Persian culture and continues an

exultant tradition that unites all those who participate. The Nowruz festival has been celebrated for more than 3,000 years to encompass a broad range of Persian customs, and it is among the unique Persian (Iranian today) cultural events that are pertinent to the traditions of all Persian religious groups.

“Nowruz, which means ‘New Day’ is by far the most joyous and important celebration among the Iranians and their neighbors in Asia,” says Touraj Daryaei, Howard C. Baskerville professor in the history of Iran & the Persianate world, Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies & Culture at UC Irvine. “The Spring Equinox marks the changing of the year and the regeneration of life and a new birth of the world according to Iranian belief. This is indeed the basis of the Nowruz celebration, which has three millennia of tradition behind it.”

“From New York to Orange County, Persians celebrate Nowruz in the United States,” says St.Clair. “This Iranian festivity is among the most unique cultural events; it is one that allows us to understand the Persian heart and soul, which has had a brilliant impact on humanity for the past several thousands of years.”

### **The Festival’s Programming**

“The musical heritage of Persia is very old and rich with its own style and character,” says St.Clair. “It is music that stirs the heart and wakes the senses. Especially during the spring; this is a time to reflect and look forward.”

ACF opens with “**Nowruz—Celebrating Spring,**” which observes the Iranian New Year by exploring intersections between American and Persian music, and takes place on Thursday-Saturday, March 22-24, at 8 p.m. in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall. Led by Maestro St.Clair, the performance features Grammy-winning soprano Plitmann, known for her astonishing musicianship and beautiful voice. *Entertainment Today* has raved, “Plitmann has a vocal instrument that is simply unreal in its beauty.” Her ability to perform challenging new works makes her the ideal choice to

perform, along with the Pacific Chorale (John Alexander, artistic director), the concert's centerpiece: Danielpour's "Toward a Season of Peace." Also on the program is Iran's preeminent conductor Mechkat, who takes turns with St. Clair on the podium, including conducting Kodaly's "Dances of Galanta." Plus, the highly acclaimed Shams Ensemble performs Persian music. Tickets for these concerts are \$25-\$100.

"I've been known in my work for many years as an American and writing in an idiomatic American way, but my parents were born in Iran," says Danielpour. "I was first-generation American, born in the U.S., but our household was deeply steeped in Persian-Jewish culture. When my sister and I took the Stanford Achievement Test as kids, there was a place to state your race: Caucasian, Negro or Other. We wrote 'Other' because we didn't think of ourselves as white. Even though we were born in America and brought up that way, we definitely felt the otherness."

Having grown up with a keen sense of personal exclusion, inclusiveness has become a critical theme for the composer. And as his ancestral country becomes increasingly politically charged, Danielpour feels an urgency to bring what healing he can to a disjointed world. The ideas of conflict, transformation, forgiveness and peace are all at the forefront of Danielpour's consciousness, something that becomes vividly apparent during the ACF concerts that feature his "Toward a Season of Peace.

"We live in a sick world that needs a lot of healing," he says. "Over time, I've realized that has borne itself out more and more in the work I've written. I am not interested so much in politics as in humanitarian issues, but often times, what is political crosses over and *becomes* humanitarian. I'm interested in human beings, in fairness, in fair treatment, in justice, in people not being used as pawns for others' political games. And that, in that sense, when something crosses over that's where you'll find me." The Symphony's Classical Connections concert, "**A New Day—Celebrating Nowruz**," takes place Sunday, March 25, at 3 p.m., in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall and deeply probes Danielpour's new work. Written for orchestra, chorus

and soprano solo, “Toward a Season of Peace” brings together sacred texts from different religious traditions, woven together with texts by the great Sufi poet Rumi. (Sufism is generally defined as the inner, mystical, esoteric dimension of Islam). Led by St.Clair, the performance features soprano Hila Plitmann and the Pacific Chorale. Tickets are \$25-\$91.

“The work is in seven movements that fall into three sections, and comprise an arc, or journey of sorts,” Danielpour says. “The first section is absorbed with texts and ideas of war, conflict, destruction, annihilation—all the juicy stuff. The middle portion, really the fourth movement, involves a choice between conflict and peace, and the last three movements involve reconciliation through forgiveness and the transformation that comes through that.

“The texts are in Hebrew, Aramaic, Farsi and English, and in all these languages spring is continually referenced as a metaphoric idea that deals with renewal and rejuvenation,” he continues. “And the center of the axis of the text is the presence of the Rumi texts, all translated into English. He’s the arbiter between the polarities you find in Hebrew and Arabic. What I find fascinating about Rumi, the greatest of Persian poets, is that in many of his poems he invokes Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. He is one of the very few who are all inclusive.”

Concluding the festival on Tuesday, March 27, at 8 p.m., in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall is a concert devoted to the **Shams Ensemble**, which draws its influence from traditional Kurdish, Sufi and classical Iranian music. The group was founded by composer Kaykhosro Pournazeri in 1977 with a vision of bringing back the lost art of the tanbour through compositions that fused the tanbour and daf with other traditional classical instruments. Tickets are \$25-\$59.

“It’s important when creating a festival such as this to make sure that the music programmed and performed has the highest degree of integrity,” says St.Clair. “My goal is to present music and musicians that will capture the true spirit of this culture and to

bring honor to its richness. Having the Shams Ensemble does this exactly. Through our work with the members of the ensemble we have learned much about the musical styles and performance practices—the dos and don'ts, if you will. The Shams Ensemble is an ensemble that will bring us powerful music performed authentically on traditional instruments.”

### **Orange County's Persian Community**

“The idea of creating an American Composers Festival to celebrate the Persian New Year actually came from one of our board members, Anoosheh M. Oskouian,” says St.Clair. “In conversation with her, she described with great joy the positive and celebratory nature of the holiday. This got my programmatic wheels turning and this festival is a result. The year 2012 is a particularly important one for Nowruz, so it seemed a perfect time to celebrate it with the Persian community.”

“Since joining the board of directors a few years ago, I have been continually impressed by Orange County's resident orchestra, Pacific Symphony,” says Oskouian. “This year's ACF holds a special place in my heart for it marks the most important celebration in the Persian culture, and to have such an amazing orchestra honor and celebrate it makes it even more spectacular. This will be a brilliant collaboration between various artists and composers to reflect the beauty of the season, celebration of peace and Nowruz. I am most grateful to Richard Danielpour for composing his world premiere and Carl's visionary and insightful leadership.

“We have invited many members of the community and organizations to join in and embrace this major undertaking,” she continues. “Farhang Foundation has been closely working with the Symphony to ensure the success of the program. I am honored and proud to be a member of both organizations and develop a stronger bond between the two and our community.

### **Farhad Mechkat**

Mechkat began his musical studies at the Geneva Conservatory of Music and graduated from the Mannes College of Music in New York. He then spent three years studying with Toscanini's disciple, Franco Ferrara in Rome and Sienna, before returning to New York where he won the prestigious Dmitri Mitropoulos International Competition for Young Conductors, entitling him to become assistant conductor to the New York Philharmonic and Leonard Bernstein. That same year, he was invited for the first time to conduct the National Iranian Radio-Television Chamber Orchestra at the Shiraz Festival of the Arts.

Later, Mechkat was solicited to take over the Tehran Symphony Orchestra as music director and principal conductor. During his tenure he brought the level of the orchestra to an international standard, putting Tehran on the musical map of the world. He has been a guest conductor at some of the major international orchestras in Italy, France, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. His attachment and love for the Italian culture earned him the honor of being one of the youngest individuals ever to be awarded the title of Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

"Maestro Farhad Machkat is one of the most distinguished musician/conductors today," says St.Clair. "It was a must from the onset to have him be a part of our festival. I am so honored he has accepted my invitation to conduct the opening work on the program. His musical experiences will be invaluable to creating an atmosphere of celebration."

### **Shams Ensemble**

The Shams Ensemble was formed with the vision of bringing back the lost art of the *tanbour* through compositions that fused the *tanbour* with other classical instruments. Pournazeri invited some of his students who were familiar with playing the *tanbour*, and

gradually they became well-known in Iran.

Initially, the group performed under the name of Tanbour-e-Shams, but adding traditional and Kurdish music to their performances, they took the name of the Shams Ensemble. Over the years, there have been more than 50 players and singers, the majority of whom were Pournazeri's students. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, women were banned from performing solo in front of men—that includes singing or playing any instruments. Only recently, women have been included as vocalists and players of the *tanbour*. Currently, the Shams Ensemble has 15 players.

### **Soprano Hila Plitmann**

The *Los Angeles Times* calls Plitmann a performer with “tremendous vocal and physical grace,” while *USA Today* wrote: “Her emotional interpretation of ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ unleashes startling fury and despair.” Of her extensive soundtrack work as a soloist for the Hollywood blockbuster “The Da Vinci Code,” *CNN* said: “Plitmann’s glissandi sail above the petty pulpits of earthly doctrine with an ethereal ease that argues for Plitmann’s pairing with [Kathleen] Battle or Dawn Upshaw.”

Plitmann, born and raised in Jerusalem and currently living in London, has accumulated an impressive catalogue of professional recordings, appearing on the Decca, Telarc, Naxos, CRI, Reference Recordings and Disney labels. The “Da Vinci Code Soundtrack” (*Decca*) was a worldwide bestseller, spending several weeks on the *Billboard* charts. Both Paul Revere’s “Ride” (Telarc), and “Da Vinci Code” received Grammy nominations, and in 2009 Plitmann won the Grammy for Best Classical Vocal Performance for her work on the Naxos recording of John Corigliano’s song cycle “Mr. Tambourine Man” with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Plitmann can also be heard on the soundtrack of the film “New York, I Love You.” She has been awarded the coveted Sony ES Prize for her outstanding contribution to the vocal arts.

While maintaining a vibrant and extraordinarily diverse professional life in film

music, musical theater and songwriting, among her accomplishments, Plitmann regularly premieres works by today's leading composers—including Danielpour's "Toward a Season of Peace."

### **ACF Composer-in-Residence Richard Danielpour**

Danielpour is one of the most sought-after composers of his generation—one whose distinctive American voice is part of a rich neo-Romantic heritage with influences from pivotal composers like Britten, Copland, Bernstein and Barber. Danielpour comments that "music [must] have an immediate visceral impact and elicit a visceral response." This visceral element can be heard throughout Danielpour's oeuvre: expansive, sweeping gestures; energetic rhythmic accentuations; contrasting stylistic characters; introspective, melodic beauty; and rich orchestrations. His impact on the contemporary music scene is undeniable.

"Richard Danielpour has written several works for Pacific Symphony in past years," says St.Clair. "Being Persian, it was a given that he compose a work for this particular ACF. In talking with him a few weeks back in New York about his new work, he intimated that it was one he had wanted to write for some years. He feels deep personal connections to this work and, after looking over the score, I know that it has come from a very intimate place in his musical spirit. It is a dramatic work that uses large forces, including orchestra, chorus and soprano soloist."

Danielpour has been commissioned by some of the world's leading musical institutions: Pacific Symphony ("An American Requiem," "Mirrors" and the newly orchestrated version of "A Child's Reliquary"); the New York Philharmonic ("Toward the Splendid City" and "Through the Ancient Valley"); The Philadelphia Orchestra (Violin Concerto); the San Francisco Symphony (Symphony No. 2, "Song of Remembrance," and the Cello Concerto); Pittsburgh Symphony (Concerto for Orchestra, celebrating the orchestra's centennial, and "A Woman's Life"); Baltimore Symphony

(“The Awakened Heart”); National Symphony (Voices of Remembrance); the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Piano Quintet and Sonnets to Orpheus, Book 1, for Dawn Upshaw); “Absolute Vodka” (Piano Concerto No. 2); the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival (Sonnets to Orpheus, Book 2); the Isaac and Linda Stern Foundation (“River of Light,” for Sarah Chang); Concertante (Kaddish); and most recently, the Sejong Soloists (Lacrimae Beati).

Forays into the world of theater yielded two ballet commissions: “Urban Dances” for the New York City Ballet’s “Diamond Project” and “Anima Mundi” for the Pacific Northwest Ballet. Danielpour’s first opera “Margaret Garner” (written in collaboration with Nobel Laureate librettist Toni Morrison), achieved critical acclaim upon its premiere in May 2005 at the Michigan Opera Theatre.

Among his awards are a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, a Charles Ives Fellowship and a Lifetime Achievement Award—both from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, five MacDowell Colony Fellowships, a Jerome Foundation Award and a Rockefeller Foundation Grant. As an educator, Danielpour serves on the faculties of both the Curtis Institute of Music and the Manhattan School of Music, while also participating in master classes and residencies around the country.

### **Music Unwound**

This unique opportunity to explore a world premiere and a thematic program celebrating an important cultural tradition made this ACF program an obvious choice as the second of three Music Unwound concerts presented in the 2011-12 season, with enhancements made possible by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The 2011-12 season is the third of the three-year initiative in which three symphony concerts use new concert formats and thematic programming to contextualize music and enrich the concert music experience. The Symphony pioneered this new way of presenting an important piece of music or composer (or both) with multimedia and

other enhancements to allow the audience deeper insights, understanding and, hopefully, a richer enjoyment of the music.

### **The Origins of Nowruz**

The story of Nowruz or the Iranian New Year is wrapped in myths and legends, which are told in the great Persian epic, the *Shahnameh* or *Book of Kings*. According to Daryae, the story goes that when one of the earliest and greatest of the mythical kings of Iran, named Jamshid, ascended the throne, he organized the realm and brought culture to people. He then made a throne with jewels and was able to have it elevated by supernatural beings to reach the heavens. According to the *Book of Kings*, he sat on the throne in the sky like the sun shining above. Then “the world’s creatures gathered in wonder about him and scattered jewels on him and called this day the New Day, or Now Ruz.”

According to this Persian tale, says Daryae, during the Nowruz, people put aside their differences, rested and made a great feast which included much wine and music. Henceforth no one knew anything of sorrow, sadness or death. This is the legendary history of the Nowruz, which is memorized for children in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and those expatriates living in other countries today. The *Book of Kings* is a thousand years old, but it is conceivable that the story was known even a thousand years before then. This is a very old legend that has lived on.

“What makes Nowruz a unique festivity is that it is now celebrated by Iranians and nation-states around the world regardless of religious affiliation,” says Daryae. “Kurds, an Iranian speaking people, celebrate the Nowruz like any other Iranian in modern day Turkey, Syria and Iraq and of course Iran. Nowruz is celebrated by different ethnic groups who at times are divided and come together for a common festivity and joyous occasion, including Afghans, Tajiks, Azaris, Kurds, Baluchis, Lurs, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkemens and many more people in the region. The celebration goes beyond

religious division, and Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Baha'is all join and unite for this one celebration to greet the regeneration of the earth.”

### **Farhang Foundation**

ACF 2012 partner, Farhang Foundation, is a non-religious, non-political and not-for-profit foundation established in 2008 to celebrate and promote Iranian art and culture for the benefit of the community at large. The foundation supports academic activities in Southern California by funding university programs, publications and conferences. The foundation also supports cultural programs such as the celebration of Nowruz and Mehregan, theater, dance performances, film screenings and poetry reading in Southern California. Farhang Foundation, in cooperation with various cultural and academic institutions plans major programs and exhibitions about Iran and its culture. For more info visit: [www.farhang.org](http://www.farhang.org).

## **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

### **American Composers Festival 2012: NOWRUZ—CELEBRATING SPRING**

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#### **NOWRUZ—CELEBRATING SPRING**

Thursday-Saturday, March 22-24, 8 pm  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, Costa Mesa

Tickets are \$25-\$100  
Box office: (714) 755-5799

Pacific Symphony—Carl St.Clair, conductor  
Farhad Mechkat, conductor  
Hila Plitmann, soprano  
Shams Ensemble  
Pacific Chorale—John Alexander, artistic director

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Program:  
Kodaly: Dances of Galanta  
Traditional Persian music  
Danielpour: Toward a Season of Peace (world premiere)

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### **A NEW DAY—CELEBRATING NOWRUZ**

Sunday, March 25, 3 pm  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, Costa Mesa

Tickets are \$25-\$91  
Box office: (714) 755-5799

Pacific Symphony—Carl St.Clair, conductor  
Hila Plitmann, soprano  
Pacific Chorale, John Alexander, artistic director

Program:  
Danielpour: Toward a Season of Peace (world premiere)

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### **SHAMS ENSEMBLE**

Tuesday, March 27, 8 pm  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, Costa Mesa

Tickets are \$25-\$59  
Box office: (714) 755-5799

Traditional Persian music

### **AMERICAN COMPOSERS FESTIVAL HISTORY**

Each year, the Symphony explores a different facet of American music through the ACF.  
Since 2000, the festival has featured composers from Aaron Copland to Ana

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Lara to Michael Daugherty and artists from Yo-Yo Ma to Stephen Scott's Bowed Piano Ensemble. By examining this diverse musical heritage, the Symphony points a microscope at who we are as a culture, where we've been, and where we are going—some of the most important questions that music can raise.

Pacific Symphony's **2011** ACF focused on one of America's most fascinating and pre-eminent living composers, Philip Glass, who went under the spotlight when Pacific Symphony partnered with Long Beach Opera (LBO) to present the first-ever Southern California Philip Glass Festival. ACF's "**The Passion of Philip Glass**" and LBO's production of the Glass opera "Akhnaten," plus accompanying events ("Glass Plays Glass" piano recital, films, lectures, discussions) all probed deeply into the man and his music to gain new understanding and a deeper appreciation for one of today's leading American composers.

The **2010** ACF explored "**The Greatest Generation**" with a look back at a time largely defined by The Great Depression. The term "The Greatest Generation," coined by Tom Brokaw, refers to those who grew up in the United States during a time of extreme deprivation but went on to fight in World War II or contribute to the effort on the home front, eventually rebuilding America. The festival delved into this turbulent period and the music that could not have been composed without the somber impetus of The Great Depression. Highlights included a world premiere by composer Michael Daugherty: "Mount Rushmore"; and West Coast premieres of Weill's "Song of the Inventory" and Walt Whitman Songs (orchestrated version).

In **2009**, "**Hollywood's Golden Age**," celebrated the art of film music, past and present by exploring the differences between composing for concerts and composing for film—and how the two styles have evolved into what we hear today. This festival revisited a unique period in our country when a number of refugee composers fled to the United States from a turbulent Europe and found Hollywood hungry for their work. The period was explored by focusing on a handful of composers, including Miklós Rozsa,

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Bernard Herrmann, who were contrasted against modern-day masters James Newton Howard and Paul Chihara.

In 2008, **The West: Music Inspired by the American Frontier**, examined “the idea of the West” in American music, sketched by Dvorák and clinched by Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson and Roy Harris. In a later stage, the idea migrated to the West Coast in the music of such Californians as Lou Harrison, whose “Four Strict Songs” were a revelation—as was the Bowed Piano Ensemble of Stephen Scott. The festival’s commissioned composers were Scott and Curt Cacioppo; festival partners included Chapman University, which hosted a multi-media event.

In 2007, **Los Sonidos de México** journeyed south of the border to celebrate the remarkable range and variety of Mexico’s musical odyssey, much of which is rarely performed in Mexico or elsewhere. The festival included some two dozen compositions over the course of six concerts and included a commissioned new work by Daniel Catán—one of three participating Mexican composers (also Ana Lara and Enrique Diemecke). A three-hour multi-media Interplay tracked music and visual art from pre-Hispanic times to the present.

In 2006, **“Uncharted Beauty: The Music of Lou Harrison”** honored one of the great American composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a pioneer in the use of alternate tunings, world music influences and new instruments. It was the last in a three-year sequence exploring the influence of non-Western music on American composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The festival included a variety of intimate chamber programs plus a large-scale concert celebrating the music of Harrison. It also featured film footage from Eva Soltes’ documentary “Lou Harrison: A World of Music,” courtesy of the Lou Harrison Documentary Project.

ACF 2005, **“Illuminations in Sound,”** featuring Colin McPhee, George Crumb and John Adams, was the second of the three-year festival sequence (ending with Lou Harrison) devoted to the influence of non-Western music on American composers. Richard Stoltzman

played works by Adams and Steve Reich. Concentrating on the rapturous, the Symphony explored the influence of Indonesian gamelan, featuring little-known works by McPhee and Jose Evangelista. Two rarely heard transcriptions by Percy Grainger of piano works by Debussy and Ravel were performed alongside the original pieces.

**“Tradewinds from China,”** the first festival of the trilogy, premiered works in **2004** by Chen Yi, Zhou Long and Joan Huang in the course of sampling the historic contribution of present-day Chinese-American composers. Yo-Yo Ma performed a new cello concerto and Min Xiao-Fen played Theonious Monk on her pipa. A children’s chorus sang Chinese folk songs; the Orange County High School for the Arts Chorus performed Chinese revolutionary songs.

In **2003**, prior to the trilogy, was **“An American Odyssey”** featuring the West Coast premiere of William Bolcom’s monumental setting of William Blake’s “Songs of Innocence and of Experience” in the course of exploring the interface between concert and popular styles. Additional festival events included a recreation of Paul Whiteman’s 1924 “Experiment in Modern Music,” with its premiere of George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue,” a newly scored set of Leonard Bernstein songs, and an evening of Blake settings by Virgil Thomson, Arthur Farwell, Henry Cowell, Alan Ginsberg and other Americans.

ACF’s **“Dvořák in America,”** in **2002**, applied a visual presentation of the “New World” Symphony, a Hiawatha Melodrama, and costumed Native American dancers to an examination of Dvořák’s American style in relation to such diverse turn-of-the-century Americans as Scott Joplin, Harry Burleigh, Victor Herbert, George Chadwick and Arthur Farwell. Mstislav Rostopovich performed the Dvořák Cello Concerto.

The first ACF took place in **2000** with Aaron Copland and the **“Sound of the Americas,”** featuring a unique screening of the classic 1939 documentary “The City” with live symphonic accompaniment—the first in a series of Copland film scores that supported his creation of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century American concert voice. Additional festival events included three films, chamber and keyboard music and special guest William Warfield.