

American Music Center & Meet The Composer plan merger Glenn Petry 212-625-2038
gpetry@21cmediagroup.com

American Music Center and Meet The Composer, Two of America's Leading New Music Organizations, Announce Merger Plans

American Composers Forum Will Assume Membership and Professional Development Services From American Music Center

The American Music Center (AMC) and Meet The Composer (MTC), two of America's three leading organizations in the field of new music, announced today their intention to merge into a new advocacy and service organization. New Music USA will reach composers, performers, and listeners in all 50 states and project a more visible and audible profile for new American music all over the world.

New Music USA will operate in two broad program areas: grant-making and media. The media programs will embrace new media in its many forms as a vehicle for connecting musicians and audience members. The grant-making programs will build on the rich histories of support within each organization by working to galvanize composers, ensembles, and communities to create, embrace and disseminate the varied and vibrant new music of today. The American Composers Forum will take on AMC's former membership services, addressing the stated desire of composers across the country for a single comprehensive membership resource.

Based in New York City, New Music USA is expected to open for business before the end of 2011 with Ed Harsh, current President of Meet The Composer, as its President and CEO. He will work in tandem through the end of the year with American Music Center's President and CEO, Joanne Hubbard Cossa, who has already announced that she will retire in December.

"The anticipated merger of Meet The Composer and the American Music Center brings together the collective vision and newly focused intensity of two organizations with a great and intertwined history," explains Harsh. "Joining forces will give us powerful new capabilities both to support the artists who create new work and to grow the market for that work."

“We’re not just combining forces here, we’re combining passion,” adds Cossa. “We’ll be multiplying more than financial clout; we’re also multiplying our shared dedication to the art form, to those who make it, and to those who enjoy it.”

After the merger is approved by AMC’s members and the court, New Music USA will be led by a single board comprising members of AMC’s and MTC’s current boards. MTC chairman Frederick Peters is being tapped as chair, and composer Steven Stucky, AMC’s current chair, is slated to serve as vice chair.

The work of New Music USA will be grounded by an endowment of approximately \$16 million. AMC’s Counterstream Radio and the Online Library are being folded into NewMusicBox to make a single mega-information media site, and MTC’s Meet The Composer Studio will continue to develop, illuminating the life and work of composers in new ways. New Music USA’s media programs are projected to receive more than 65,000 page views monthly. On the grant-making side, the new organization will continue all of MTC’s and AMC’s current core programs, which are projected over the next year to affect about 1,600 composers and ensembles, to result in 145 commissions or premieres of new works, and to support about 15 new recordings.

The three national organizations currently serving the new music field are the American Music Center, Meet The Composer, and the American Composers Forum (ACF). With the realignment into two organizations, AMC will transfer its membership services to the Minnesota-based ACF, headed by President and CEO John Nuechterlein. The ACF will thus become the leading national new music membership organization and provider of professional development to composers, while continuing its own work in commissioning, residencies, and its innova® recording program.

“The American Composers Forum has had a successful history of partnering with our New York colleagues to provide a comprehensive slate of services to the field,” comments Nuechterlein, “and we’re delighted that relationship will continue. We’re committed to ensuring a vibrant ecosystem of support for both our members and their communities.”

“The members have spoken and we are responding to their needs,” AMC’s Cossa continues. “AMC and ACF jointly surveyed their constituents in 2008 and 2010, and easier access to benefits was a clear issue. By working with the ACF, we can now offer composers, performers, scholars and arts professionals one-stop shopping for information and other services.”

All members will have access to a comprehensive opportunities database, member profile pages, and professional development resources, as well as the ability to upload works into the Online Library, without having to belong to two different organizations.

Town Meetings for the new music community are being planned around the country, in order to answer questions and gather feedback. The first of these meetings will take place in New York City on Friday, April 1, at the Thalia Café at Symphony Space. Subsequent meetings are

scheduled in San Francisco on April 15 and Chicago on April 29. The leaders of all three current organizations, Cossa, Harsh and Nuechterlein, will take part.

The rich history of the American Music Center, Meet The Composer and the American Composers Forum is filled with luminaries of the new music world. “Nearly every notable composer working in America has been involved in these organizations,” notes Harsh. “Aaron Copland was among the American Music Center’s founders in 1939. Our three organizations are a virtual ‘Who’s Who’ of music in America.”

“All of us at MTC are proud to be part of this historic merger,” comments Peters. “New Music USA will bring together the unique strengths of its two constituent organizations to develop audiences dynamically by underwriting the creation of new music and the musicians and ensembles that perform it.”

"New media is the vehicle for creating new markets for new music, and it will be a privilege to carry this important work into the future with colleagues as dedicated as Fred Peters and Ed Harsh," remarks Stucky.

Background:

The **American Music Center** (www.amc.net) was founded in 1939 by Aaron Copland, Howard Hanson, Otto Luening, Marion Bauer, Quincy Porter and Harrison Kerr to “foster and encourage the composition of contemporary music and to promote its production, publication, distribution and performance in every way possible”. Since that time, AMC has been a leader in providing field-wide advocacy, support, and connection. With the digital revolution, AMC has increasingly concentrated on promoting 20th- and 21st-century music through new media, especially through its online magazine NewMusicBox, Internet station Counterstream Radio, and Online Library database of 57,000 scores and media files. A primary function of the American Music Center has been acquiring and disseminating information. AMC’s vast, historic collection of 20th-century scores is housed at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and its 20th-century composer memorabilia at the Library of Congress.

Meet The Composer (www.meetthecomposer.org) was founded in 1974 as a project of New York State Council on the Arts, originally under the umbrella of the American Music Center, and then as an independent organization led by composer John Duffy. For more than 35 years MTC has been dedicated to the idea that interaction with a living composer and his or her work has the power to energize and transform musicians and audiences alike. MTC’s programs have put more than 45 million individuals in all 50 states in touch with more than 6,500 composers. Those composers collectively represent the full spectrum of contemporary musical style, from classical to jazz, from traditional to experimental. In MTC’s most recently completed fiscal year, its programming distributed more than \$1 million, involving 438 composers and 331 organizations.

The **American Composers Forum** (www.composersforum.org), which celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2010, is committed to supporting composers and developing new markets for their

music. Through granting, commissioning, and performance programs, and by linking communities with composers and performers, the Forum fosters a demand for new music, enriches communities, and helps develop the next generation of composers, musicians, and music patrons. Founded in 1973 as the Minnesota Composers Forum, the organization has grown from an innovative regional initiative into one of the nation's premier composer service organizations, with 1,800 members in all fifty states and thirteen countries, and chapters in Philadelphia, San Francisco and Los Angeles. It is home to the innova® recording label, with more than 400 titles distributed worldwide through Naxos USA, and *Composers Datebook*®, a nationally-syndicated radio program with more than 1.1 million listeners each week.

#

©21C Media Group, March 29, 2011