

HENRY DEHLINGER

LONG BIO

1132 Words

Composer **Henry Dehlinger** is an exciting arrival on the contemporary classical music scene. Hailed by *Gramophone* as “a master of myriad styles planted largely in tonal soil” and “a pianist of exceptional fluency,” his vocal, chamber, and orchestral works are helping shape the landscape of 21st century American music.

Throughout Dehlinger’s output, one finds a modern musical language that is evocative yet familiar. It makes use of eclecticism while being rooted in the American vernacular, whether he is writing for small ensembles, symphony orchestras, or solo voice and piano. In his large-scale vocal and choral works, he renders themes from a diverse palette of musical styles to amplify the texts he is setting. These fragments are then woven into meaningful aural experiences that are at once epic and intimate.

“Dehlinger shapes music to illuminate the meaning of the text,” opines *Gramophone’s* Donald Rosenberg, “The songs are diverse in atmosphere and harmonic language... and the writing is rich, often rapturous.”

Musicologist James Melo adds, “Dehlinger has been one of the most successful practitioners of polystylism, a distinctly 21st-century musical style that draws from multiple influences, genres, traditions, and techniques.”

Audiophile Audition’s Steven Ritter calls his work “stunningly superb” and “formidably essential listening!”

His latest album, *At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger*, was released in October 2020 by Avie Records. This world premiere recording of his vocal solo works adds to the list of critically acclaimed collaborations with Metropolitan Opera soprano Danielle Talamantes and her bass-baritone husband, Kerry Wilkerson. It is featured on Spotify’s *High Notes* playlist, representing “the best new releases in opera and vocal music.”

Dehlinger’s stylish arrangements of the Duke Ellington Songbook, with their melodic lines and edgy vocal and piano writing throughout, are equally celebrated. *Fanfare Magazine* calls them “superbly judged, from the lyricism through to the stride.”

“Just as impressive,” says *Journal of Singing’s* Gregory Berg, “is how Dehlinger weaves together those fragile pastel shades with the bold brassiness of stride piano. In lesser hands, the result would be musical chaos; Dehlinger makes it work perfectly.”

Born and raised in San Francisco, Dehlinger studied piano and sang in the San Francisco Boys Chorus during his formative years. His mentors were piano virtuoso Thomas LaRatta, choral conductor William "Doc" Ballard, and voice teacher Edith Doe Ballard. All three helped shape him as a performer and an artist. He earned a reputation as a prodigious talent, singing with the San Francisco Opera and performing with major orchestras under conductors such as Riccardo Chailly and Edo de Waart. He graduated from Santa Clara University where he studied piano with Hans Boepple.

The end of the second decade of the millennium marks the culmination of a prolific period for Dehlinger the composer. During the 2019-20 season, sixteen of his compositions have had their premieres. For the 2020-21 season and beyond, Dehlinger premieres at least five more, including three large-scale works.

Inspired by the famous poem by T.S. Eliot is *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (2017). This sweeping rhapsody for voice and orchestra will be first performed by National Philharmonic at Strathmore. Composed for the voice of Danielle Talamantes, the piece examines the twin crucibles of paralysis and isolation in modern urban life and embraces a musical aesthetic that merges classical and vernacular elements. *Prufrock* also uses the melodic and rhythmic contours of Eliot's stream of consciousness narrative to dictate mood and melodic character.

Kohelet (2019), a cantata in five movements for mixed chorus, soloists, and orchestra, is Dehlinger's magnum opus to date. Composed for the Washington Master Chorale, Santa Clara Chorale and Santa Clara University Concert Choir, it combines lush, modal melodies, energetic meters, and colorful harmonic textures with Hebrew text from Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Dehlinger drew his inspiration for *Kohelet*, in part, from Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, a work he performed in his youth as a soloist with the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Like *Chichester*, *Kohelet* is an ecumenical blend of Judaic antiphonal singing and Christian choral tradition that is alternately boisterous and reverent.

Dehlinger's *Amore* (2019) kicks off National Philharmonic's livestream orchestra concert, *Amore & Mozart*, in spring 2021. The full title – *Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa* – translates to "Love and the gentle heart are one and the same." Dehlinger composed the piece for his friends Jennifer and Eddie's nuptials in Florence, Italy. What better text could he set than a beautiful love sonnet in Italian from *La vita nuova* by revered Florentine poet Dante Alighieri? Moreover, it enjoys its premiere with the operatic duo of Talamantes and Wilkerson, who sang it on the album, *At That Hour*, and at the wedding!

Other notable compositions include *Fantasia in Groove* (2021), a concert suite of urban impressions of Los Angeles for cello and piano; *Ring Out, Ye Bells* (2021), a setting of

African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar's reverent Christmas hymn; *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day* (2021), a new choral setting of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous Christmas poem; *Hodie!* (2020), Dehlinger's thrilling Christmas concert opener for mixed chorus; *Preludes of T.S. Eliot* (2020), a setting of Eliot's four-part poem that further explores themes of isolation in modern urban life and which Dehlinger wrote in response to the coronavirus pandemic; *Cello Sonata in C Minor* (2020); *Three Choral Songs on James Joyce* (2019); *At That Hour When All Things Have Repose* (2019); *Bahnhofstrasse* (2019); *On the Beach at Fontana* (2019); *Simples* (2019); *Alone* (2019); *Flood* (2019); *Strings in the Earth and Air* (2019); *Night Piece* (2019); *Tutto è sciolto* (2019); *A Memory of the Players in a Mirror at Midnight* (2019); *Questa fiamma* (2017); *Requiescat* (2017); *Fragrance* (2016); and *The Mount* (2015).

Memorial Day (2020) is Dehlinger's tribute to the fallen men and women of the U.S. armed forces. Scored for TTBB chorus, trumpet in C, and snare drum, it is a setting of the solemn poem of the same name by Joyce Kilmer – American poet, patriot, and fallen hero who was killed by an enemy sniper's bullet during the Second Battle of the Marne in World War I.

Dehlinger's other recordings include *Evocations of Spain* (2011), a solo recital of piano works by Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados; *Canciones españolas* (2014), a critically acclaimed recital of Spanish songs by Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla and Joaquín Turina and Dehlinger's first musical collaboration with Danielle Talamantes; and *Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook* (2016), also with Talamantes, featuring Dehlinger's arrangements of Ellington jazz standards, which *Audiophile Audition* called, "a knock-your-socks-off performance that leaves you hankering for much, much more."

Dehlinger is a voting member of The Recording Academy and ASCAP. Dehlinger, his wife Lauren, and their Shetland Sheepdogs, Spy and Summer, divide their time between their homes in Northern Virginia, just outside Washington, DC, and Northern California.

His official website is: www.HenryDehlinger.com.

May 2021