

# HENRY DEHLINGER

C O M P O S E R

## LONG BIO

*1253 Words*

Hailed by *Gramophone* for his “vibrantly colorful palette” and “exquisite piano-playing,” American composer Henry Dehlinger has created an oeuvre of remarkable choral, chamber, and orchestral music that is transforming the landscape of contemporary music.

Nineteen of his new works are premiering across the United States during the 2019-21 seasons. These include three concert works, two chamber works, four choral songs, and ten art songs.

His latest album is *At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger*. Released by AVIE Records in October 2020, it is the world-premiere recording of Henry's vocal solo collection and promises to be a significant contribution to the modern art song repertoire.

Largely eschewing experimental techniques, Henry’s compositions represent an innovative, but tonal American aesthetic that merges classical and vernacular elements.

Musicologist James Melo writes, “Henry 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. He is also a major champion of vocal and choral music, and his polystylism allows him to chart a wide range of emotions, allusions, and images.”

This “21<sup>st</sup> century musical style” described by Melo is evident throughout Henry’s oeuvre. But it is especially pronounced in his latest extended concert works, such as *Kohelet* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

In both, Henry renders themes from a diverse palette of musical styles, amplifying the texts he is setting. These fragments are then woven into meaningful aural experiences that critics have called “stunningly superb” and “formidably essential listening!”

*Kohelet* is an epic cantata in five movements for mixed divisi chorus, soloists and orchestra. 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*. Henry drew his inspiration for *Kohelet*, in part, from Leonard Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms*, a work he

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performed often as a boy singer with the San Francisco Boys Chorus. Like *Chichester, Kohelet* is an ecumenical blend of Judaic antiphonal singing and Christian choral tradition.

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, premiering at the National Philharmonic at Strathmore, is a sweeping rhapsody for voice and orchestra that Henry adapted from the famous poem by T.S. Eliot. Composed for Metropolitan Opera soprano Danielle Talamantes, it embodies a modern musical language while suggesting a familiar symphonic American vernacular. *Prufrock* also uses the melodic and rhythmic contours of Eliot's stream of consciousness narrative to dictate mood and melodic character.

James Melo explains, "In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, Dehlinger approaches the voice as another instrument capable of the most varied and nuanced delivery...Dehlinger also honors the internal structure of Eliot's poem by using references to different musical genres to articulate the various sections of the music, such as the complex rhythms of the dance-like scherzo that concludes the work, an example among many."

Equally celebrated are Henry's stylish arrangements of the *Duke Ellington Songbook*. With their melodic lines and edgy vocal and piano writing throughout, they have achieved widespread appeal. *Fanfare Magazine* calls them "superbly judged, from the lyricism through to the stride."

Henry is a leading composer of art songs. Inspiration comes from the poetry of Dante, Edgar Allen Poe, Oscar Wilde, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, and others. His art songs are popular among young classical singers, especially for recitals, competitions, and graduate school auditions.

Also popular are Henry's choral songs. They are accessible to a broad range of ensembles and have been performed by professional, volunteer, and high school choruses from across the country. His *Three Choral Songs on James Joyce—Night Piece, Strings in the Earth and Air* and *Bahnhofstrasse*—are especially admired and continue to be performed.

Henry looks forward to the 2020 premiere of his new *Hodie!*, which is scored for mixed chorus, organ, harp and percussion. Modal melodies and driving accompaniment set up the joyous Latin text, while mixed meters generate energy in this thrilling Christmas concert opener.

His vocal chamber repertoire includes *Preludes of T.S. Eliot*, a setting of Eliot's four-part poem that explores themes of modern urban life, and *Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa*

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(“Love and the gentle heart are one and the same”), a love sonnet from *La vita nuova* by Dante Alighieri and the composer’s wedding gift to two of his close friends who were married in Florence, Italy.

In summer 2020, the National Philharmonic announced it was premiering Henry’s new orchestral adaptation of *Amore* to kick off its special Valentine’s Day program. Called *Amore & Mozart*, it will be livestreamed from the Marriott Concert Stage at the Music Center at Strathmore on February 14, 2021.

Like other musicians and performing artists, Henry’s work was impacted by the 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic. The National Philharmonic at Strathmore, the Washington Master Chorale and the Santa Clara Chorale postponed the remainder of their 2019-20 seasons, including the premieres of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Kohelet*, both of which will be rescheduled in upcoming seasons.

In 2011, Henry released his first album, *Evocations of Spain* (2011), a solo recital of piano masterworks by Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados. In 2013, he began a collaboration with soprano Danielle Talamantes that resulted in two more critically acclaimed albums. Henry’s second album, *Canciones españolas* (2014), is a collection of Spanish songs by Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla and Joaquín Turina, which “stands out from the crowd,” as *Gramophone* affirmed in its applauding review.

The third, *Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook* (2016), features Henry’s own arrangements of Ellington’s jazz standards that he wrote for Danielle. *Audiophile Audition* called it, “a knock-your-socks-off performance that leaves you hankering for much, much more.” *Fanfare Magazine* concluded, “This is simply a superb album, stunningly recorded, that deserves every success.”

Henry’s fourth album, *At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger*, was released October 16, 2020. This world premiere recording of his compositions for solo voice marks the beginning of his association with AVIE Records, the UK-based independent classical music label. It was recorded over three days at Sono Luminus studios in rural Boyce, Virginia, with soprano Danielle Talamantes and bass-baritone Kerry Wilkerson and produced by Grammy winner Erica Brenner. Danielle and Kerry both light up the stage not only as individual performers but as a husband-and-wife duo. That alone would make this album special. What makes it unique is that all seventeen tracks in this recital were composed especially for *their* voices.

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Born and raised in San Francisco, Henry grew up studying piano and voice. His mentors were piano virtuoso Thomas LaRatta and choral conductor William "Doc" Ballard, artistic director of the San Francisco Boys Chorus, both of whom Henry credits for his early success as a musician. 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 later graduated from Santa Clara University where he studied piano with Hans Boepple.

During his recital career, *ConcertoNet.com* lauded him as “an experienced and versatile soloist.” *MusicWeb International* praised his "delicious piano playing," and *Audiophile Audition*, his "adroit and sparkling" performances.

Henry is a voting member of The Recording Academy, organizer of the Grammy Awards, and ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers). He and his wife Lauren and their Shetland Sheepdogs, Spy and Summer, divide their time between their home in Northern Virginia, just outside Washington, DC, and California. The official Henry Dehlinger website is [www.HenryDehlinger.com](http://www.HenryDehlinger.com).

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