

HENRY DEHLINGER

COMPOSER

Long Bio/Press Kit

(1270 words)

American composer **Henry Dehlinger** is hailed by *Gramophone* as “a master of myriad styles.” His vocal, choral and symphonic [works](#) are widely celebrated by *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, *Barron's*, *Gramophone*, *Agence France-Presse*, *Opera World*, *Journal of Singing*, and more, standing out for their rich, tonal expression and modal harmonic language. “[Dehlinger's music does wonders](#),” says *The Washington Post*, which praises his lush, orchestral soundscapes as “an unexpected emotional punch.” His vocal works, *Gramophone* adds, “are diverse in atmosphere and harmonic language, as befits the narratives, and the writing is rich, often rapturous.”

Dehlinger was born in San Francisco's Mission District, where his mother, an immigrant from Nicaragua, and his father, a local union leader, first made their home before moving to Millbrae, just outside the City. During his formative years, he studied piano and sang in the San Francisco Boys Chorus. His mentors were piano virtuoso Thomas LaRatta, choral conductor William "Doc" Ballard, and voice teacher Edith Doe Ballard. All helped shape him as an artist and provided him with an aesthetic focus for his creative energies.

He earned an early reputation as a prodigious talent, performing in productions with the San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Symphony under conductors including Kurt Herbert Adler, Riccardo Chailly, and Edo de Waart. He graduated from Santa Clara University where he studied piano with Hans Boepple. After meeting his wife Lauren, a native of Los Angeles, he moved to the East Coast in 2007 where they have since lived in the Washington, DC area.

Dehlinger's extraordinary command of orchestral color and texture is on full display in his latest work, [Cosmic Cycles, A Space Symphony](#) (2023), an epic suite of seven symphonic poems commissioned by the National Philharmonic and composed in close collaboration with NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. *Cosmic Cycles* is paired with a stunning visual canvas of science imagery and data visualizations of the Sun, Earth, Moon, Planets, and Cosmos, many of them from the James Webb Space Telescope, projected in HD on a giant screen above the orchestra.

“You can have majesty, wistfulness, and ethereality coexist,” Dehlinger explains in “[Looking for Art in the James Webb Telescope](#),” the September 2023 piece in *The New Yorker* that puts a spotlight on Dehlinger's composition of *Cosmic Cycles*. “You know you're dealing with wonderful material when it can elicit more than one emotion.”

Cosmic Cycles drew a sellout crowd. “A grand seven-movement narrative arc emerges from the sequence of images and music,” said *The Washington Post*, which described it as “a harmonically rewarding wander through the stars.” *Agence France-Presse* called it “[the ultimate blend of art and science](#).”

On March 17, 2022, Dehlinger's [Return to the Moon, A Fanfare to Artemis](#) (2022) heralded a new era of human space exploration when it marked the Kennedy Space Center's rollout of NASA's Space Launch System rocket, the main launch vehicle of the space agency's Artemis lunar program. *The Washington Post* praised the fanfare as a “triumphant-sounding skyward salute.”

Dehlinger also writes deftly for the voice. His [Kohélet](#) (2019), a cantata in five movements that premiered in March 2022, demonstrates his keen sense of pacing, drama and architecture within the context of large-scale musical form. Commissioned by the Washington Master Chorale, Santa Clara Chorale, and Santa Clara University Concert Choir, it is beautifully theatrical and an important new addition to the canon of extended choral works with Hebrew texts.

Likewise with [Requiem](#) (2021), Dehlinger's seven movement setting of the Requiem Mass commissioned by Choralis for mixed choir, soloists and orchestra, which was inspired by the example of Duruflé. With an emphasis on divine aesthetic beauty, it is at once contemplative and jubilant.

Dehlinger's rhapsodies reveal his improvisatory prowess. Emerging from the pandemic, the National Philharmonic's 2021-22 season opened with the premiere of [The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock](#) (2017), a rhapsody for voice and orchestra with text by T.S. Eliot. Written for Metropolitan Opera soprano Danielle Talamantes, the composer's friend and artistic collaborator, *Prufrock* has drawn comparisons to Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* for its lyricism and mix of classical and vernacular styles.

In the second half of the *Prufrock* concert, violinist Gil Shaham took the stage for Beethoven's *Violin Concerto in D Major*. In a backstage meeting, Shaham encouraged Dehlinger to write a work for solo violin. Composed for Shaham, [Rhapsody for Solo Violin and Orchestra](#) (2022) is replete with scalar runs, double stop trills, intricate cadenzas and a dramatic coda that celebrate Shaham's improvisational virtuosity.

In spring 2021, [Amore e' il cor gentil sono una cosa](#) (2019) ("Love and the gentle heart are one and the same") premiered during a concert broadcast on WETA-TV, Washington's PBS station. A pièce d'occasion written for the Florence, Italy nuptials of two of the composer's closest friends, *Amore* is a setting of the beautiful love sonnet from Dante's *La vita nuova*. *Opera News* calls it, "a loving and clever duet, and a true gem of a song."

Other important works include: [Earth as Art](#) (2023), a chamber arrangement of the third movement of *Cosmic Cycles*; [Nocturno](#) (2023), a setting of text by Rubén Darío for soprano and tenor, which draws on Dehlinger's Nicaraguan heritage; [City Dusk](#) (2022), a chamber setting of F. Scott Fitzgerald's beautifully noir poem for baritone and string quartet; [Images](#) (2021), a choral setting of Richard Aldington's modernist love poem; and [Preludes of T.S. Eliot](#) (2020), a setting of Eliot's four-part poem for soprano, cello and piano that explores themes of isolation in modern urban life and which Dehlinger wrote in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Dehlinger has also contributed a body of accessible Christmas songs to the choral canon. These include: [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 setting of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's famous Christmas poem that combines a memorable melody with splashes of color and an energetic tempo; [Mistletoe](#) (2021), a four-part round based on Walter de la Mare's much loved Christmas poem; and [Hodie!](#) (2020) for mixed choir, percussion, harp and organ.

Dehlinger's sonatas for cello and piano are among his most significant works of chamber music. Inspired by familiar Los Angeles cityscapes, [Fantasia in Groove: Three Impressions of L.A.](#) (2021) is a concert suite of urban impressions for cello and piano that recalls the sound of classic noir films, while evoking the fast-paced, stop-and-go groove of big-city life. His [Cello Sonata in C Minor](#) (2020) loosely follows the traditional sonata form with contrasting themes developed in each movement. But there is also a cross-thematic unity that encompasses the entire work.

Dehlinger's latest album is [At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger](#) (2020), released by AVIE Records in October 2020. "On Dehlinger's newest disc, 'At That Hour,'" *Gramophone* notes in its review, "he [Dehlinger] collaborates with [soprano Danielle] Talamantes and another dynamic singer, bass-baritone Kerry Wilkerson, in his recorded debut as a composer of art songs, whose verses he has transformed through disarming music."

Equally celebrated are Dehlinger's stylish jazz-classical arrangements featured in [Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook](#) (2016), which he wrote for Talamantes and released on the MSR Jazz label. "Just as impressive," says *Journal of Singing* in its review, "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." His other recordings are [Canciones españolas](#) (2014), also with Talamantes, and [Evocations of Spain](#) (2011).

Dehlinger is a member of ASCAP and The Recording Academy. The official Henry Dehlinger website is www.HenryDehlinger.com.

-October 2023

In the News

[NASA's Webb Telescope Inspires ARTECHOUSE Exhibit, Public Art](#)

NASA.gov, September 15, 2023

[Looking for Art in the James Webb Telescope: Artists are finding inspiration in the newest images of old and ancient stars.](#)

The New Yorker, September 14, 2023

[VIDEO: NASA StoryLab: "Scoring the Cosmos" featuring Henry Dehlinger](#)

StoryLab, June 14, 2023

[US 'space symphony' puts stunning NASA images to music](#)

Agence France-Presse, May 17, 2023

[NASA Goddard, National Philharmonic Explore Cosmos Through Imagery, Music Collaboration](#)

NASA.gov, May 15, 2023

[NASA and National Philharmonic team up for another successful launch: Composer Henry Dehlinger collaborated with NASA and the National Philharmonic to create his new orchestral and multimedia suite, "Cosmic Cycles"](#)

The Washington Post, May 12, 2023

[National Philharmonic To Debut A 'Space Symphony' In Concert With NASA](#)

DCist/WAMU, May 9, 2023

[Audience Wowed by Singer Danielle Talamantes, Composer Henry Dehlinger, and The National Philharmonic World Premiere at New Capital One Hall in Tysons](#)

The Zebra, October 23, 2021

['At That Hour': Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa. A Dream. Fragrance. The Mount. Ten Poems of James Joyce. Questa fiamma. Requiescat. Shir Hashirim](#)

Gramophone, February 2021

[Heaven and Earth, A Duke Ellington Songbook](#)

Journal of Singing, April 16, 2021

[Something New Under the Sun - Feel the music: Henry Dehlinger is premiering musical magic at SCU](#)

The Santa Clara, April 6, 2020

[Heaven and Earth, A Duke Ellington Songbook](#)

Audiophile Audition, September 16, 2016

[Canciones españolas - Falla, Granados, Turina](#)

Gramophone, May 2015

Works

2022-23 Season Premieres

[*Cosmic Cycles, A Space Symphony*](#) [Large Orchestra in Seven Movements] [May 2023]

[*City Dusk*](#) (Baritone and String Quartet) [May 2023]

[*Images*](#) (Soprano, Baritone and String Quartet) [May 2023]

[*Preludes of T.S. Eliot*](#) (Soprano, Cello and Piano) [May 2023]

[*Nocturno*](#) (Soprano, Tenor and Piano) [May 2023]

[*Earth as Art*](#) (Flute, Clarinet in B flat, Harp and String Quartet) [Jun 2023]

[*Requiem*](#) (SATB Choir, Soloists and Orchestra) [Oct 2022]

2021-22 Season Premieres

[*Kohelet, A Cantata in Five Movements*](#) (SATB Choir, Soloists and Orchestra) [Mar 2022]

[*Return to the Moon, A Fanfare to Artemis*](#) (Large Orchestra or Concert Band) [Mar 2022]

[*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, A Rhapsody for Voice and Orchestra*](#) [Oct 2021]

[*Questa fiamma*](#) (Soprano and Orchestra or Piano) [Oct 2021]

2020-21 Season Premieres

[*Amore e' cor gentil sono una cosa*](#) [Soprano, Baritone and Orchestra] [May 2021]

[*A Dream*](#) (Medium Voice) [Oct 2020]

[*Hodie!*](#) (SATB) [Dec 2020]

2019-20 Season Premieres

[*Alone*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*At That Hour When All Things Have Repose*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*Flood*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*A Memory of the Players in a Mirror at Midnight*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*On the Beach at Fontana*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*Requiescat, A Wilde Stride*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*Simples*](#) (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[*Tutto è sciolto*](#) "All is lost now" (High Voice/Medium Voice) [Feb 2020]

[Bahnhofstrasse](#) (SATB/TTBB/High Voice/Medium Voice) [Oct 2019]

[Night Piece](#) (SATB/TTBB/High Voice/Medium Voice) [Oct 2019]

[Shir Hashirim](#) “Song of Songs” (Duet) [Oct 2019]

[Strings in the Earth and Air](#) (SATB/High Voice/Medium Voice) [Oct 2019]

[Three Choral Songs on James Joyce](#) (SATB) [Oct 2019]

Other Notable Works

[Fantasia in Groove: Three Impressions of L.A. for Cello and Piano](#) [2021]

[I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day](#) (SATB) [2021]

[Mistletoe](#) (SATB) [2021]

[Rhapsody for Solo Violin and Orchestra](#) [2021]

[Ring Out, Ye Bells!](#) (SATB) [2021]

[Cello Sonata in C Minor](#) [2020]

[Memorial Day](#) (TTBB) [2020]

Music Catalog

[View all works](#)

Recordings & Discography

[Cosmic Cycles, A Space Symphony](#) (NASA Goddard YouTube Channel) [2023]

[Amore e' cor gentil sono una cosa](#) (NatPhil YouTube Channel) [2021]

[At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger](#) (AVIE Records) [2020]

[Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook](#) (MSR Jazz) [2016]

[Canciones españolas: Granados, Falla, Turina](#) (MSR Classics) [2014]

[Evocations of Spain: Piano Music of Albéniz & Granados](#) (Indie) [2011]