

HENRY DEHLINGER

COMPOSER

Biography

(654 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, 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. 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.

His latest work is *Cosmic Cycles, A Space Symphony* (2023), a bold and evocative journey through the Cosmos. Commissioned by the National Philharmonic for its 2022-23 season, Dehlinger’s epic suite of seven symphonic poems was composed in close collaboration with NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. It 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. His extraordinary command of orchestral color and texture is on full display in this monumental work, which *Agence France-Presse* calls, “the ultimate blend of art and science.”

“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.”

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’s rhapsodies and fantasias reveal his improvisatory prowess. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (2017), a rhapsody composed for Metropolitan Opera soprano Danielle Talamantes, has drawn comparisons to Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* for its lyricism and mix of classical and vernacular styles. *Fantasia in Groove* (2021), a concert suite of urban impressions of Los Angeles for cello and piano, recalls the sound of classic noir films, while evoking the fast-paced, stop-and-go groove of big-city life. Composed for violinist Gil 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.

Dehlinger also writes deftly for the voice. Recent additions to the choral canon include *Kohelet* (2019), a cantata in five movements sung in Hebrew, commissioned by the Washington Master Chorale, Santa Clara Chorale and Santa Clara University Concert Choir; and *Requiem* (2021), Dehlinger’s setting of the Requiem Mass, commissioned by Choralis. Both demonstrate the composer’s keen sense of pacing, drama and architecture within the context of large-scale musical form. Dehlinger’s art songs are equally admired. “Each piece,” *Gramophone* says, “reveals the fastidious way Dehlinger shapes music to illuminate the meaning of the text.”

For more, please visit www.HenryDehlinger.com.