

OTHER MINDS PRESENTS

**HENRY COWELL**  
**THE WHOLE WORLD OF MUSIC**

November 12–13, 2009

Portola Valley & San Francisco, California



OTHER MINDS PRESENTS

**HENRY COWELL:  
THE WHOLE  
WORLD OF  
MUSIC**

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*Henry Cowell: The Whole World of Music* has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of *American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius*



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Bust of Henry Cowell  
by Gertrude Boyle Kanno, 1917

## HENRY COWELL: A WELCOME MESSAGE

Charles Amirkhanian, Artistic Director, *Other Minds*

Composer Lou Harrison often emphasized the ingenuity of his teacher and colleague Henry Cowell by referencing his driving habits. When confronted with a steep hill on a typical drive through San Francisco, Cowell's Model T sometimes could not make the grade. So he'd simply turn the car around, put it in its trusty reverse gear, and slowly back up the hill instead. Far be it from Henry Cowell to be inhibited by convention.

It's a distinct pleasure to welcome you to our mini-celebration of the life and music of Henry Cowell, surveying a selection of his lesser-known music. You will be hearing the first-ever presentation of his complete works for organ performed by Sandra Soderlund, rare performances of his "United" Quartet (No. 4) and String Quartet No. 5, played by the Colorado Quartet, a group of his songs performed by Cowell specialists Wendy Hillhouse and Jodi Gandolfi, the violin sonata he composed for Joseph Szigeti, played by David Abel and Julie Steinberg, and *Set of Five* for violin, piano and percussion, written for Anahid and Maro Ajemian and played here by the Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio. Sarah Cahill, who has been performing Cowell's solo piano music for decades, also weighs in with some of his classic pieces using tone clusters and string strumming.

We're pleased to have with us Anahid Ajemian and her husband, jazz record producer George Avakian, who were close friends with Cowell in New York, as well as John Duffy, founder of Meet the Composer, who studied composition at the New School with Henry Cowell. Joining us too will be pianist, conductor, concert producer and co-director of New York's Continuum Ensemble, Joel Sachs, author of Cowell's forthcoming biography. And we thank the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, the Stanford University Music Library, Goerge Slack, the David and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund and the Estates of John Cage, Lou Harrison, and Dane Rudhyar for materials on exhibit in the foyer of the Presidio Chapel and for items reproduced in this program booklet.

Henry Cowell certainly is one of the seminal 20th-Century figures in American classical music. Born in Menlo Park, California, in 1897, he was the first to recognize and promulgate the pathbreaking works of our musical George Washington, Charles Edward Ives. Perhaps his independent, even rebellious, West Coast perspective enabled Cowell to appreciate the New England genius of Ives more readily, along with that of his colleagues Carl Ruggles, John J. Becker, Dane Rudhyar, Edgar Varèse, Colin McPhee, Henry Brant and a host of others. Mr. Ives, a successful insurance entrepreneur, returned the favor by investing heavily in many of Cowell's projects to disseminate "ultra-modern" American music, via publications and performances surreptitiously underwritten by Ives himself.

For the past 15 years, Other Minds has shaped its programming in the spirit of the American maverick composers that Cowell discovered and promoted with such energy and good spirit. Like Ezra Pound, who championed American Objectivist poets George Oppen, Charles Reznikoff, Louis Zukofsky and Carl Rakosi, Cowell sought out talented mavericks and gave them a platform. Now Other Minds is pleased to recognize the genius of Cowell's own music with this modest survey of his chamber music, to which we welcome you with all our fists and forearms.

It was here in Northern California that Cowell studied with the influential musicologist Charles Seeger, began to concertize as a barnstorming pianist of unusual predilections, and later taught two of the most significant composers in history: John Cage and Lou Harrison, who followed Cowell's advice to embrace all the world's music and create hybrids that could reinvigorate classical music.

One final note, illustrating Cowell's kindness, diplomacy and optimism: When explaining something esoteric beyond the possible ken of his listener, Cowell often would begin with, "Well, as you *know* . . ." I first heard in this construction in 1968 from composer Robert Hughes, co-founder of the Cabrillo Festival, who was buying an LP from me when I was a young clerk at the Sea of Records in San Francisco on Mission and Ninth Streets. Hughes, and another customer, John Rockwell, were urging me to apply for the job of Music Director at Radio KPFA. Later I learned that Hughes studied with Lou Harrison, who, when I was interviewing him on KPFA *also* used this formulation liberally. Finally I asked Lou about it after we got off the air. "Lou, of course I didn't know *any* of those things you were explaining to the audience." "Yes," he said, "but I learned from Henry Cowell that the best way to share information is to error on the side of generosity." Cowell's example had touched me directly in a most unexpected way.

Indeed, generosity was what Cowell, more than any other composer figure of his time, practiced liberally with his colleagues. He galvanized a generation of composers with no national identity into a legion of American creative artists with a profile worthy of notice internationally. Is it any wonder that one of his best students, John Duffy, went on to found the legendary support organization Meet the Composer?

Our thanks to the *American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius* program of the National Endowment for the Arts, for a major gift that has made possible this production in honor of Henry Dixon Cowell.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely of Charles Seeger, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



Cowell with students of his course, "Music of the World's Peoples" at New School for Social Research, including composer John Duffy (center, rear)

## HENRY COWELL: THE WHOLE WORLD OF MUSIC

### EXHIBITION CATALOG

Other Minds is proud to present a selection of items for viewing representative of Henry Cowell's broad achievements in new music, including photographs from various times in his life, correspondence with fellow artists, advertising materials, published items, portraits, and other ephemera.

#### Photographs

- Photograph of Cowell with students of his course, "Music of the World's Peoples" at New School for Social Research (above)
- Photograph of Cowell seated with Charles Ives at the Ives home in West Redding, Connecticut, 5" x 7", 1951 (pg. 6)
- Photograph of Cowell at the piano, 8" x 10", 1912 (pg. 9)
- Photograph of Cowell meeting Mr. Sobohy, staff poet of Radio Tehran, who improvised a poem in Farsi on the occasion, 8" x 10", 1956 (pg. 15)
- Photograph of Cowell with his mother in front of Menlo Park home, 3" x 5.5", 1911 (pg. 24)
- Photograph of Cowell with Anahid and Maro Ajemian (pg. 27)

#### Letters

- Letter from Maro Ajemian regarding *Set of Five*
- Letter from Cowell to Maro and Anahid Ajemian
- Letter from Cowell to Ernst Bacon, April 8, 1938

*(listings continue on page 7)*



Photograph of Cowell seated with Charles Ives at the Ives home in West Redding, Connecticut, 5" x 7", 1951

[1927]

Menlo Park, Calif.  
July 27th, 1927

Dear Mr. Ives:

I am hoping that you will be interested in becoming a subscriber to "New Music" of which I enclose an announcement. I also hope that you may feel like offering some compositions for consideration for publication in "New Music", and I further hope that you will do the New Music Society of California (which publishes New Music) the honor of allowing it to use your name as a member of the advisory board. There is no obligation attached to this position. The Society is altruistically favorable to the furtherance of newer ideas in music, and gives concerts in San Francisco and Los Angeles, of modern works.

sincerely yours,  
*Henry Cowell*

Letter from Cowell to Charles Ives, July 27, 1927, requesting his participation in New Music

## Letters (cont.)

- Letter from Cowell to Ernst Bacon discussing *Toccanta*, September 29, 1938
- Letter from Cowell to Ernst Bacon discussing organizational memberships in the League of Composers and New Music Edition, January 18, 1941
- Letter from John Cage, 1934
- Letter from Lou Harrison, February 13, 1952, inviting Cowell to Black Mountain College
- Letter from Cowell to Charles Ives, July 27, 1927, requesting his participation in *New Music* (pg. 6)
- Letter from Dane Rudhyar, September 27, 1927, congratulating Cowell on the first publication of *New Music Quarterly*
- Three letters from Cowell to Rudhyar, each featuring handwritten music on the reverse side

## Artwork

- Bust by Bruce Keuffer
- Bust by Gertrude Boyle Kanno, 1917 (pg. 3)
- *Portrait of Henry Cowell* by Anne Parker Wigglesworth, oil on canvas, 92 x 60 cm, 1964

## Publications

- Boziwick, George. "Henry Cowell at the New York Public Library." *Notes*. September 2000: 46–58.
- Cowell, Henry, ed. *American Composers on American Music*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1933.
- Cowell, Henry. *New Musical Resources*. New York: Something Else Press, Inc., 1969.
- Mead, Rita. *Henry Cowell's New Music, 1925–1936: The Society, the Music Editions, and the Recordings*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981.
- Selected long-playing record albums
- Selected musical scores

## Programs and Booklets

- Program from March 12, 1933 concert at the MacDowell Club, which included performances of *Where She Lies*, *How Old Is Song?*, and *Manaunaun's Birthing* with Cowell at the piano (pg. 20)
- Program from April 29, 1948 concert at Times Hall, whose program included the New York premiere of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, with Madeleine Carabo (violin) (pg. 31)
- Program from the first California concert presentation of the New Music Society, October 22, 1925, at the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, featuring music of Leo Ornstein, Darius Milhaud, Dane Rudhyar, and Edgard Varèse (pg. 33)
- Program booklet celebrating Cowell's 65th birthday in March 1962, produced by Broadcast Music, Inc.
- Program booklet from "Henry Cowell's Musical Worlds: A Centennial Festival," March 12–25, 1997

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Poster advertising "Musics of the World" lectures

### Promotional Materials

- Card advertising December 13, 1922 concert at the Palace of Fine Arts (pg. 11)
- Catalogue for New Music Edition (pg. 13)
- Flyer advertising May 8, 1935 lecture-recital by Dane Rudhyar, presented by the New Music Society in San Francisco's Forest Hill neighborhood (pg. 24)
- Flyer and order form for the *New Music Quarterly*, 1933 (pg. 43)
- Poster advertising "Musics of the World" lectures (above)

*Items from the Henry Cowell Papers at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts reprinted by permission of the David and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund, Inc.*

*Special thanks to the David and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund, Inc., the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts, the Stanford University Department of Special Collections, the Stanford University Department of Music, the Library of Congress, David Abel and Julie Steinberg, Charles Amirkhania, Anahid Ajemian and George Avakian, Elizabeth Auman, Ellen Bacon, John Duffy, Charles Hansen, Jonathan Hiam, Leyla Hill, and Laura Kuhn.*



# HENRY COWELL

By Joel Sachs

Calling Henry Cowell's life remarkable is a huge understatement. He was born in Menlo Park, California March 11, 1897 to Harry Cowell and Clara (Clarissa) Dixon Cowell, an unconventional pair of writers who numbered among the lively philosophical anarchists of the San Francisco Bay Area. They were so un-bourgeois that Henry professed to be surprised upon learning years later that they actually had been married. When Henry was about 6 years old his parents split up. Clarissa doggedly but unsuccessfully attempted to earn a living as a writer; intermittent child support from Harry only mildly alleviated their poverty. Yet this very poverty brought Henry an extremely unusual musical education that shaped his whole life. Living at the edge of San Francisco's poor Asian neighborhood, he learned the songs of other children from all over the Pacific. Clarissa wanted to encourage his musicality—he had already studied violin briefly—and knew that he should hear the grand opera but, unable to afford tickets, took him to hear the Chinese opera through an open window. This childhood left him with a sense that all the world produced great music. He said no one ever told him that Western music was considered superior.

Fleeing the terrors of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Clarissa and Henry spent some time with her relatives in Des Moines, Iowa and went on to New York. Henry's education progressed thanks to a myriad of libraries, free lectures, and free concerts. But an income eluded her. Found on the edge of starvation in 1909, they were sent by a social service agency to Clarissa's family in rural Kansas. There her brother gave Henry an old piano and, it appears, established the course of his life. About a year later they were back in California.

In the mid-west Henry had suffered health problems and was harassed by bullies at school. Despising public schools as cookie-cutter education, Clarissa decided to teach him at home.



Cowell at the piano, 1912

His reading lists put most anyone to shame: by the age of 15 he had read everything from children's novels to great philosophers, historians, and naturalists. He was, however, also called upon to support their tiny family as Clarissa developed cancer. Henry sold wildflowers that he picked in the hills near Menlo Park, in the process becoming an expert on California botany. He also held odd jobs as an assistant school janitor and cowherd. One day, reportedly while tending to the cows, he attracted the attention of a Stanford professor who was so impressed by the articulateness of the little unwashed boy that he introduced him to a colleague, the psychologist Lewis Terman. Terman, who was commencing a long-term study of extremely gifted children, quickly discovered that Henry, with almost no formal education, had acquired an immense vocabulary—nearly 20,000 words—prodigious knowledge, especially of the sciences, and a stack of short musical compositions to his credit. Terman's colleague, English professor Samuel Seward, marshaled the support of wealthy friends so that Henry could take classes at Berkeley, study English with Seward, and have piano and theory lessons. At Berkeley his mentor was Charles Seeger, a brilliant and unorthodox young professor of music. Seeger developed an unusual method of teaching Henry largely because the young man, a stubborn autodidact, gave him no other option. Meanwhile, Henry also had become deeply involved with the Theosophist community at Halcyon as well as intellectuals at Carmel. Among the Theosophists, the most important was John Varian, who deepened his knowledge of Irish culture. The Varian boys, Russell and Sigurd, and other friends including a future dean of MIT, shared and developed Henry's ideas about acoustics that play a central role in his theoretical ideas. By the time he was 20, Henry Cowell was assembling a provocative treatise later published as *New Musical Resources* and began performing publicly. His promising career was interrupted when America entered the Great War. Enlisting in the army, he served as a cook and assistant band-master at a camp in Pennsylvania. Combat duty was on the horizon when the war ended.

Now Cowell embarked upon a career as a concert pianist that propelled him onto the world stage. Because the traditional elements of his piano music—especially its glorious melodic spirit—are so clear, it is difficult to imagine the shock of seeing him play it for the first time, using his forearms and fists, or reaching into the piano to strum and stroke the strings as if stirring an enormous cauldron of sound. Soon he was a famous “ultramodernist,” made to order for journalists who could exercise their imaginations in ways that “classical” music rarely permits. “Kid Knabe Takes Heavy Punishment, But is On His Feet At End Of Bout” proclaimed the *New York Telegraph* after his 1924 New York debut. Prominently positioned on the sports page, the review was only the beginning. Dozens of American newspapers carried the word of the concert through the wire services, but virtually none of them had anything to say about his music. Cowell's Leipzig concert (during his first European tour, 1923) provoked a riot; a Parisian article about his London debut (December 10, 1923) was reprinted in a Casablanca newspaper.

While the journalists made him into an unwilling sensationalist, musical leaders such as Bartók, Schnabel, and (later) Schoenberg offered him their encouragement. Schoenberg invited Cowell to be a guest at his Berlin composition seminar; Bartók requested permission to use Cowell's “tone clusters” (harmonies of seconds) in his music. In 1929 Cowell accepted an official invitation to be the first American composer to visit the young Soviet Union. Unfortunately, he arrived just as the battle between innovation and proletarian conservatism was intensifying. He was barred from performing until the outraged Rector of the Moscow Conservatory arranged for him to give daily marathon concerts for students in a “safe” room. He was finally granted one public performance in Moscow and one in Leningrad. Undaunted by the clash, the state music publishers even printed two of his piano pieces. To Cowell's lasting astonishment, they did something unheard of in America—they paid him to print his modernist music!

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 13th, at 3:30 P. M.

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HENRY COWELL  
Composer - Pianist

**H**ENRY COWELL, born in California and educated exclusively in America, ranks with the foremost of the young composers (he is still in his early twenties), and is becoming one of the most talked of modernists of the day.

Mr. Cowell's compositions, published by Breitkopf and Hartel, Inc., run over a great variety of styles, including the classical, romantic and ultra-modern. Most interesting and entirely unique is his development of playing a new kind of chord, which he calls the "tone cluster", all the keys being played together and making the powerful effect of a percussion instrument, capable of both definite pitch and sustained tone.

Irish by extraction, Mr. Cowell has become deeply interested in Irish myths, several of his most remarkable compositions having been inspired by these ancient legends.

**PRESS SNAPSHOTS**

"The remainder of the program was devoted to works of Henry Cowell whose understanding of modern musical idiom is remarkable. . . . What Cowell can do with his arms and elbows in addition to his hands, is little short of freakish in appearance, but not in result. . . . His second group based on three Irish legends, brought the surprise of the afternoon. . . . The three compositions were amazingly interesting."—Chicago Musical Leader, November 16, 1922.

"The Tides of Manaunaun is a series of remarkable clusters of tones and overtones and the base is played entirely with the whole forearm. The theme is played with the right hand in a steady rhythmic flow, which, in conjunction with the great tone clusters composed of the higher harmonics from the eleventh up in units, give a magnificent, stirring whole, which is entirely new in every point.—New York Times, July 12, 1922.

"That Cowell possesses a genuine talent there can be no doubt, and the quality of his work is such as to warrant a belief in his logical development. . . . Cowell's talent is not ephemeral, but is solidly rooted and sturdy in its potentialities of growth. He is versatile in his modes of expression and clever in his workmanship. Most important of all, he has the poet's vision and insight." Ray Brown, "San Francisco Chronicle," Nov. 8, 1920.

"A great composer is Henry Cowell; his recital changed from a success to an ovation." Chas. Isaacson, New York "Globe."

"Mr. Cowell is a musician of unusually interesting quality. He is a thinker and a theorist on the future of the tonal art as well as a composer of an intriguing talent.

He knows what he is about, and his work is marked by that knowledge and intention. The composer's harmonic originality is coupled with an expressional style that transforms the piano into an orchestra, and not a small orchestra at that! . . . Mr. Cowell's execution of his pieces was altogether masterly and his occasional explanatory remarks were delightfully pithy and entertaining." Pitts Sanborn, "The Globe & Commercial Advertiser," New York, May 12, 1922.

**Tickets - - \$1.50****Students' Tickets - - 75c****On Sale at Sherman, Clay & Co.**

No War Tax

Until 1936, Cowell divided his time between the East and West Coasts of the United States. In California, his activities on behalf of fellow composers were as remarkable as his music. In 1925 he organized the New Music Society of California, which was the principal mechanism on the West Coast for the performance of unconventional music. Soon he began publishing *New Music*, a quarterly publication of compositions that commercial publishers would not touch, and then *New Music Quarterly Recordings*. In New York he joined with Edgard Varèse, Carl Ruggles, the Mexican Carlos Chávez, the Franco-American harpist Carlos Salzedo, and others, to organize the Pan American Association of Composers, which strove to encourage inter-American performances. Without Cowell's tireless work, nothing might have come of the organization. One of its main achievements was to mount the first concerts of American orchestral music in Europe, conducted by Nicolas Slonimsky, the Spaniard Pedro Sanjuan, and Anton Webern. These activities would have rung up large deficits had Cowell not attracted the enthusiastic, generous, and discreet financial and moral support of Charles Ives. All his enterprises are marked by extraordinary open-mindedness: Cowell sought quality, not conformity. His contemporaries stated again and again that his selflessness and energy created an atmosphere in which all American composers could flourish.

In 1930 Cowell published his theoretical treatise *New Musical Resources*. Post-1945 innovators have expressed astonishment that Cowell envisioned so early such a wealth of extensions of the musical materials, including the coordination of pitch ratios and rhythmic ratios, a novel system of notating irregular rhythms, using the player-piano to demonstrate unplayable rhythmic relationships, and countless other ideas. Conlon Nancarrow was among those who acknowledged the book's huge influence upon him. Three years later Cowell published a second book, *American Composers on American Music*. Widely praised for its innovative approach, the book's essays by American composers about their colleagues remain an invaluable record of the formative years of American modernism.

When, in 1928, the New School for Social Research asked Cowell how he might organize a music program, he simply declared that he would create a program that no other school offered and got the job. Cowell focused his program upon living composers, whom he would invite to speak to classes, and organized forums at which pairs of composers discussed their music. He especially enjoyed pairing composers who disliked each other's work.

One of Cowell's most famous courses at the New School was "Music of the World's Peoples," which, in combination with concerts of non-Western music, became a model for the propagation of world culture. Believing since childhood that all music was equally valid, he had studied Japanese and Bengali instruments and theory in New York and began organizing performances by non-western performers as early as 1924. In 1931, awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for research (not composition), he eagerly devoured the gigantic recorded collection of non-Western music at the University of Berlin. At the same time he had lessons on Javanese and Balinese instruments. Cowell became convinced that the world's music should be a pool of resources, from which composers could draw anything that stimulated them. For the rest of his life he passionately informed anyone who would listen about the glories of our planet's music.

Yet while Cowell was effectively creating a world of new American music, his constant activity neither generated a decent income nor had any prospects of doing so in the middle of the Great Depression. Furthermore, his personal life remained unsatisfying. In 1922 his fiancée had been killed when her car was hit by a train; a later romance, with a German woman, ended because she could not get a visa to the United States and he could not consider living under the Nazis. In 1936 Cowell pleaded guilty to a morals charge involving an adult man who apparently attempted to blackmail him, and his world collapsed. Through an extraordinary series of events, he was

# CATALOGUE

NEW MUSIC EDITION  
HENRY COWELL, EDITOR  
P. O. Box 356, San Francisco, California

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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Wallingford Riegger: Three Canons for Four Woodwinds.  
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Anton Webern: Geistlicher Voktext, for voice and three instruments.  
Adolph Weiss: Sonata for Flute and Viola.

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Charles Ives: "The Gage," medium voice.  
Charles Ives: Thirty-four Songs.  
Leo Ornstein: "The Corpse," medium voice.  
Amadeo Roldan: Negro Bambon, from *Motivos de Son*.  
Amadeo Roldan: Aye, Ma, El Negro Negro, from *Motivos de Son*.  
Amadeo Roldan: Siguo, from *Motivos de Son*.  
Irene Weisshaus: Six Pieces for Voice Alone, low voice.

### PIANO WORKS

Joseph Achron: "Statuettes."  
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John J. Becker: Symphonia Brevis.  
Henry Brant: Two Sarabandes.  
Carlos Chavez: "36."  
Carlos Chavez: Sonata.  
Ruth Crawford: Piano Study in Mixed Aspects.  
Ruth Crawford: Four Preludes.  
Richard Donovan: Suite.  
Arthur E. Hardestadt: Prelude No. 4.  
Charles Ives: Movement from "Sat."  
Colin McPhee: Concerto with Wind Octet.  
Colin McPhee: Kinosis—Involution.  
D. Rudhyar: Three Passes.  
Arnold Schoenberg: Klavierstück.  
Nicolas Slonimsky: Studies in Black and White.  
Gerald Strang: Mirrorcrystin.  
Adolph Weiss: Six Preludes.

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Charles Ives: Fourth Symphony (second movement) for large orchestra.  
Charles Ives: Lincoln, for chorus and large orchestra.  
Charles Ives: Theatre Set, for small orchestra.  
Colin McPhee: Concerto for piano and eight woodwinds.  
Jerome Moross: Passes.

Wallingford Riegger: Dichotomy, for chamber orchestra.  
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William Russell: Fugue, for eight percussion instruments.  
Edgar Varese: Ionisation (for 13 percussion players. (See *Programme of New Boldly & Co., Paris*).  
Adolph Weiss: American Life, for large orchestra.

### Catalog of Manuscripts for Orchestra and Chamber Works.

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Jose Ardevol: 9 Paganellas Picasas, for Small Orchestra.  
Jose Ardevol: Six Symbolical Poems, for Small Orchestra.  
Jose Ardevol: Dos Trozos Músicas, for Large Orchestra.  
Jose Ardevol: Estudio (en forma de "Preludio y Fuga"), for Percussion Orchestra.  
John J. Becker: Symphonia Brevis, for Large Orchestra.  
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Henry Brant: Symphony, for Large Orchestra (25 minutes).  
Henry Brant: Two Choral Preludes, for String Orchestra (7 minutes).  
Henry Brant: Concerto for Flute, Accompanied with Ten Flutes (20 minutes).  
Henry Brant: Variations, for Chamber Orchestra (12 minutes).  
Henry Brant: 5 and 10c Store Music, for Large Orchestra (12 minutes).  
Henry Brant: Lyric Pieces, for Chamber Orchestra (4 minutes).  
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Alejandro Garcia Caturla: Yumbo-O, for Full Orchestra.  
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Charles Ives: Decoration Day and Washington's Birthday, latter for Strings, Horn and Bell.  
Charles Ives: Allegro Moderato, for Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpets, Trombone, Percussion, Strings and Piano.  
Charles Ives: Hallowe'en, for String Quartet and Piano.  
Charles Ives: The Pond, for Voice or Basses Horn, Flute, Harp, Cello and lib, strings and Piano.

Charles Ives: Luck and Work, for Basses Horn, Clarinet or Voice, Flute, Three Violins, Piano and Drums.  
Charles Ives: Two Choruses with Chamber Orchestra (The New River, and December).  
Jerome Moross: Ballet, for Small Orchestra.  
Wallingford Riegger: Prelude and Fugue, for Large Orchestra.  
Wallingford Riegger: Elegy, for Large Orchestra.  
Wallingford Riegger: Trio, for Horn, Flute, and Cello.  
Dane Rudhyar: Five Stanzas, for String Ensemble.  
Dane Rudhyar: Surge of Fire, for Small Orchestra.  
Dane Rudhyar: Oranons, for Small Orchestra.  
Dane Rudhyar: To The Real, for Large Orchestra.  
Carl Ruggles: Vox Chiamens, for Contralto with Small Orchestra.  
William Russell: Three Dances, for Four Percussion Players.  
Carlos Salzedo: The Enchanté Isle, for Harp and Orchestra.  
Carlos Salzedo: Feasible et Jeux, for Harp, Flute, Oboe, Horn, String Quartet and Double Bass.  
Carlos Salzedo: Concerto, for Harp and Seven Wind Instruments.  
Ella Szigetarsky: May Day, for Small Orchestra.  
William Grant Still: La Guibléasse, Ballet, for Three Solo Dancers, Corps de Ballet, Contralto and Full Orchestra.  
William Grant Still: Solofji, Choral Ballet, for Three Solo Dancers, Corps de Ballet, Bass, Chorus and Full Orchestra.  
William Grant Still: The Sovereign (Fantastic Scene for Pantominists and Dancers) Two Solo Dancers, Corps de Ballet, Five Pantominists and Full Orchestra.  
William Grant Still: Elton Chronicle, Poem, for Full Orchestra.  
William Grant Still: From The Land of Dreams, for Woodwinds, Strings, Percussion and Three Female Voice treated instrumentally.  
William Grant Still: Leave Land, for Soprano, Soloist, Two Violins, Woodwinds, Two Horns, Piano and Percussion.  
William Grant Still: From The Black Belt, Suite, for 2 Flutes, Oboe, 2 Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, 2 Horns, 3 Trumpets, Trombone, Percussion, Harp and Strings.  
William Grant Still: From The Journal of a Wanderer, Suite, for Full Orchestra.  
Gerald Strang: Quintet, for Clarinet and Strings.  
Gerald Strang: String Quartet.  
Adolph Weiss: Variations, for Large Orchestra.  
Adolph Weiss: Karolymsky, for Chamber Orchestra.  
Adolph Weiss: Woodwind Quintet.  
Adolph Weiss: String Quartet No. 2.  
Adolph Weiss: Libation, Beacca, for Chorus, Soloists and Orchestra.

sentenced to 15 years in San Quentin for a single act of consensual oral sex with no accusation of seduction or force. (That law did not distinguish between heterosexual or homosexual oral sex; all such acts were punishable.) The notoriously hard-line Board of Prison Terms and Paroles repeatedly rejected his attempt to gain parole, in part fearing to take on the press, which had sensationalized Cowell's arrest. Restricted to writing one letter a day, he could not keep up his external activities. The California new-music concerts that he had pioneered died; Gerald Strang took command of *New Music* and Otto Luening administered the recording project. But Cowell refused to languish in prison. He wrote a book on melody, composed for the prison band and for the "outside," was assistant conductor of the band, formed an orchestra, studied Japanese, continued to practice shakuhachi, and taught music to more than 2,000 inmates. Most important, he never became bitter.

Fortunately, in 1938 California elected its first liberal Democratic governor, Culbert Olson. Horrified by the penal system in California—sentences tended to be much longer than in other states and the prisons were notoriously brutal—he revamped it and appointed a new Board of Prison Terms and Paroles. In 1940, after four years behind bars, Cowell was paroled to White Plains, New York, where Percy and Ella Grainger housed him and employed him as a librarian and secretary. A year later he married Sidney Robertson, a woman of amazing intelligence and talent.

In 1942 Cowell was offered a government job that required traveling. But his status was a major obstacle. Apart from the fact that the federal government could not hire a convicted felon, Cowell was not free. Parole means serving the sentence beyond the walls. Any travel had to be cleared with his parole officer, who was under no obligation to authorize a journey. A pardon was the only solution. Sidney, who had more than enough spunk to tackle the tangled California legal system, spent months there dealing with the complexities of the application. Finally, having achieved the support of everyone involved in the case, including the prosecution, she convinced Governor Olson to pardon her husband just at the end of 1942. It was in the nick of time. The Governor was leaving office on December 31, and the Cowells feared that the new governor would be unsympathetic. Olson had been defeated by very conservative [*sic*] Earl Warren. Now truly a free man, Cowell worked in the Office of War Information (OWI) to organize music to accompany American "informational" broadcasts to Europe, Asia, and Latin America. He was eminently suited to the post, recognizing that the people of the targeted areas had to be provided with music that they liked, not music that appealed to Allied disc jockeys.

The end of the war brought new problems. OWI was shut down. Although Cowell was well known in California, he felt he had to avoid working publicly there because the Hearst newspapers were sure to stir up trouble. That is also why he and Sidney never publicized the pardon or their marriage. Urgently needing a job, he helped manage his father-in-law's fig ranch near Fresno, but after about a year moved back to the East Coast. Their hopes for a large family were dashed by a miscarriage that seriously damaged Sidney's health, but they found some of the solace in nature so familiar from California in a lovely little house near Woodstock, New York, where Henry could compose peacefully amidst the glorious countryside. They also kept a small apartment in New York City, which he needed during term time at Columbia and the New School. He resumed teaching at the New School and got an adjunct's position at Columbia University; later he taught at Peabody in Baltimore and gave summer courses at the Eastman School of Music. In 1955 he and Sidney published their biography of their old friend Charles Ives. Instead of piano recitals, he now gave lecture-recitals about his colorful career, modern composition, or non-Western music. Always the articulate and witty speaker, Cowell achieved stature internationally as a spokesman for American music and world music.

In 1955, Sidney Cowell learned that Henry's heart was in such miserable shape that he'd be lucky to live six more months. Keeping the worst news from him, she decided that he would live longer if he lived fully. They launched a plan for a round-the-world trip to hear the world's music in its natural environment. The Rockefeller Foundation offered him a grant to scout local talent and spot cultural problems that could benefit from the Foundation's assistance; the State Department engaged him



Cowell meeting Mr. Sobohy, staff poet of Radio Tehran, who improvised a poem in Farsi on the occasion, 1956

as a specialist to consult with the Iranian radio on programming and Sidney, a trained folklorist, recorded street singing in Iran for the Library of Congress. Their year was filled with amazing adventures too numerous to recount; suffice it to say that their visit to the great Madras festival of traditional Indian music was one of the high points of both their lives.

Unfortunately, shortly after arriving in Karachi, Pakistan, Cowell suffered the first of some seven strokes. Nevertheless, he lived for nearly nine more years—perhaps, in part, because he did not know how bad his health was. (He died of a cancer whose existence was also withheld from him.) In these last years he made more major trips to Europe and Asia, continued teaching until compulsory retirement, composed prolifically, served on innumerable boards and committees including Composers Recordings Inc. and the American Composers Alliance, and enjoyed his enormous international circle of friends. He had become a grand older man of music. He died December 10, 1965, in Shady, New York. Composing almost to the very end, he died as he had lived, an incurable optimist.

Cowell's contribution to American musical culture was enormous. His compositional legacy has fallen somewhat to changing fashions. His works, numbering some 950 (many of them very tiny), embrace an immense variety of styles. While the quality is uneven—as one would expect from a man who preferred writing a new work to rewriting one that he had just finished—at its best it is truly magnificent. What unites all his music is a continuing spirit of exploration. What does not unite his music is a single personal style. He approached each work as an individual requiring unique treatment, and could never understand why a composer should adhere to a single, instantly recognizable language. His radical piano compositions of the 1910s and 1920s are his most celebrated works, but equally daring are later pieces that combine Western and non-Western techniques, such as the orchestral works *Ongaku* and the "*Madras*" *Symphony*, where the Japanese or Indian elements have almost driven the pieces out of the Western orbit, or *26 Simultaneous Mosaics*, an early aleatoric piece. Even Cowell's most conservative works contain a quirkiness that reminds us of his beloved Irish wit.

If one thing united Henry Cowell's music and his life, it is the absence of "angst." An eternally positive man, he kept moving forward even in the face of poverty, remained buoyant even in prison, and lived a life in music that brought him ceaseless joy. By the time he died, he had proven that one determined person can have a lasting impact on the artistic life of his country. The efforts of this "man made of music" led to the development of an American musical world in which composers no longer feared to be themselves. □

# HENRY COWELL: THE WHOLE WORLD OF MUSIC CONCERT 1

Thursday, November 12, 2009

Valley Presbyterian Church

945 Portola Road

Portola Valley, California

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**“Adagio” from Ensemble (1924)**

Hannah Addario-Berry, cello

Anthony Brown, thunderstick

•

**Toccanta (1938)**

Madison Smith, soprano

Sarah Holzman, flute

Hannah Addario-Berry, cello

Sarah Cahill, piano

•

**The Tides of Manaunaun (1912)**

**The Trumpet of Angus Og (1924)**

**Exultation (1921)**

**Aeolian Harp (1923) and Sinister Resonance (c. 1930)**

**Anger Dance (1914)**

Sarah Cahill, piano

•

**INTERMISSION**

**How Old Is Song?\*** (1931)

**Thou Art the Tree of Life (1955)**

**April (1918)**

**Where She Lies\*** (1924)

**The Pasture (1944)**

**Spring Pools (1958)**

**Rest (1933)**

**Song in the Songless\*** (1921)

Wendy Hillhouse, mezzo-soprano

Josephine Gandolfi, piano

•

**Quartet Euphometric (1916–19)**

**String Quartet No. 4 “United” (1936)**

Colorado String Quartet

*\*These works are unpublished and performed by permission of The David and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund, Inc., from the Cowell Collection at the New York Public Library*



## “Adagio” from Ensemble (1924)

*Ensemble* was written in 1924 and is dedicated to patroness Blanche Walton, who particularly supported contemporary composers refusing European influences. At this time Cowell was instrumental in the International Composer’s Guild, headed by Varèse. The Guild was formed in 1921, and *Ensemble* was premiered on the second concert of the 1924–25 season (2/8/25). Cowell described the piece as follows:

“In *Ensemble* there is no externalized program. The ideas, moods, and emotions portrayed in it cannot be as well expressed in words as by the music itself. Since *Ensemble* was written with regard to its musical content rather than adapting its parts to suit the tone quality of certain instruments, it is open to being played by any combination of orchestra instruments upon which the range is practicable and the balance of parts can be maintained.

“The Thunder Stick is an instrument of Southwest Indians used in initiation ceremonies. [Also known as a bull-roarer in the Plains Indian culture.] It is a sacred thing, to be used only by a priest, and at night, so that the cause of the sound may not be known to the listener. It produces a soft whirring not unlike that of the wings of a quail in flight, which is employed in *Ensemble* to form a sustaining background for the other instruments in two of the movements.”

The original five-movement version of *Ensemble* is scored for string quintet and three Southwest American Indian thundersticks (bullroarers). The third movement is a monody which, while not in a formal twelve-tone organization, does hold to the principle of non-repetition of tones. The work has been transcribed for string orchestra and chamber orchestra, and the *Adagio* movement (variously known as *Adagio sostenuto*, *Adagio legato*, and *Adagio*) was also inserted in *Sinfonietta* (1956).

– adapted from notes by Terry King

## Toccanta (1938)

The *Toccanta* was written in California in 1938 for two families of friends then playing and teaching at Bennington College in Vermont (Otto Luening, flutist, Ethel Cobb Luening, soprano, Anna Lee Camp (Bacon), cellist, and Ernst Bacon, pianist). The voice sings a wordless vocalise and is treated simply as one of the four instruments. Its special intensity and warmth serve to increase the human expressivity of the music, but it is not used as a vehicle for words. There are no extra-musical implications or associations.

The work is in five short movements, three of which use all four instruments, with two trios (minus the piano) set between them.

The title is a portmanteau word intended by the composer to add a vocal implication to the word *toccata* (which since Bach’s day has meant a fantasia-like or rhapsodic show piece for an instrument). In Cowell’s *Toccanta* the music requires of the voice that it fit into the instrumental texture, and of the instruments that they sing their lines like voices.

The music emerged from a preoccupation with the possibilities of rhapsodic melodic expression (suggested by the extraordinary vocal virtuosity of Ethel Luening), in combination with the ostinato accompaniment, comparatively free of harmonic suggestion, that underlies the intense melismatic singing of the Near East. The use of more than one melodic line, the interplay between the three melodic instruments, and the thematic development of the wide-spanned melodies, are Western elements in the piece.

Virgil Thomson’s New York *Herald Tribune* review of April 14, 1951, spoke of the work in the following terms: “Mr. Cowell’s *Toccanta* . . . an attractive and animated idyll . . . A discreet

exoticism gives the work its color, while its technical means depends upon an occasional polytonal statement, a series of rhythmic ostinati and a sweeping lyric line of considerable poignancy and refinement. The *Toccanta* is novel, warm-hearted and skillful, neither more nor less; but every measure of it is good fun.”

– from the jacket of Columbia Masterworks Modern American Music Series LP ML 2986

### **The Tides of Manaunaun (1912)**

*The Tides of Manaunaun* was written in the winter of 1911–1912 in California, as a prelude to a pageant based on the Irish mythological poems of John O. Varian. Cowell first played the piece in public in San Francisco, on the day after his fifteenth birthday—March 12, 1912. Since its publication by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1922, it has been the most widely performed of the tone-cluster pieces. Margaret Mikoloric (who played it in New York before Cowell’s own debut there) recorded it for Welte-Mignon player piano roll about 1925, as did Cowell later for Pleyel in Paris. Edwin Hughes played it for the informal gathering at the White House that followed Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first inauguration in 1932, and it was on Percy Grainger’s programs for several years. Rechristened *Deep Tides* by Stokowski, it became the first of the four *Tales of Our Countryside* (originally *Four Irish Tales*), orchestrated and performed by the composer with Stokowski’s All-American Youth Orchestra on a Columbia release in 1941.

A simple modal melody is supported by one- and two-octave clusters, both chromatic and diatonic, sometimes arpeggiated.

Manuanuan was the Irish god of motion, who sent tremendous tides sweeping through the universe to keep its particles fresh until the time should come for the gods to make of them stars, seas, suns and worlds.

– Peter Bartok, Moses Asch, Marian Distler and Sidney Cowell,  
from *Henry Cowell Piano Music*, Folkways 3349, 1963

### **The Trumpet of Angus Og (1924)**

*The Trumpet of Angus Og* is based on *Angus Og (The Spirit of Youth)* (1917), one of seventeen solo songs, choruses, and instrumental works by Cowell inspired by the poetry of John Osborne Varian. Cowell collaborated with Varian from 1913 to 1931; the most intensive period was during the creation of an Irish mythological pageant-opera, *The Building of Bamba*, which was performed in 1917 at a theosophist community based in Halcyon, California.

Diatonic and played on the white keys, *The Trumpet of Angus Og* is mostly in C major with some modal passages, and is in the form of a rondo. Angus Og is the god of eternal youth in Irish mythology, charged with renewing the youth of the gods with the tones of his trumpet.

– compiled from notes by Henry Cowell, Robert Osborne, Peter Bartok,  
Moses Asch, Marian Distler and Sidney Cowell

### **Exultation (1919)**

*Exultation* is what Cowell called a “walking tune.” Over a rhythmic accompaniment of left-arm clusters in 3/4 the right hand plays an eight-measure Lydian tune in alternating measures of 4/4 and 5/4. The rhythmic patterns in the melody are virtually identical in each phrase, as are the articulation and bouncy style, lending an element of naive squareness to the metrically complicated situation. The second tune (derived from the accompaniment to the first) unfolds in broad phrases, with the roles of right and left now switched. The pentatonic melody appears in right-arm clusters in 3/4 over a two-layered left-hand accompaniment in varying pulses of 4/4 and 2/4. Again, rhythmic patterns remain basically the same from phrase

to phrase. After a brief interlude without clusters, all the foregoing is repeated with minor variations, and the piece ends in a resounding crash.

– Bradford Gowen

### **Aeolian Harp (1923) and Sinister Resonance (c. 1930)**

*Aeolian Harp* is sounded entirely on the strings of the piano. Chords are depressed silently on the keyboard to release their dampers so that when the strings are stroked only the tones so selected will sound. Single tones are plucked, *pizzicato*, as the proper key is depressed to free the string desired. The form is that of a prelude. The simple chord melody is sounded in several related phrases that are joined by the short pizzicato leading passages.

An aeolian harp is a tiny wind harp that children make of silk threads stretched across an arched twig like a bow. Hung in a windy spot, the silken strings give forth high, faint, indiscriminate sounds, loud or soft according to the force of the wind.

Although played on the piano keyboard, *Sinister Resonance* has an unusual tone quality because the strings are altered by various manipulations with the fingers. Different timbres and pitches are produced in the same way on the piano as they are on bowed instruments. Stopped tones are produced in the normal way that pitches are obtained on a violin or cello, pressing the string against the fingerboard. Muted tones sound when a mechanical mute is added, limiting and altering vibration. Harmonics (overtones) are produced by stopping the string lightly at the proper node, or fractional point. The timbres thus produced on a piano are, of course, quite different from those produced by similar techniques on any other instruments. The form is that of a simple prelude, depending for contrast on tone quality rather than variation or development. When harmonics are used, the pitches are, of course, not those of the tempered scale. This piece, with some others in which Cowell used mechanical mutes or plectra, was a taking-off point for John Cage's explorations of prepared piano music, in which Cage fixed mechanical additions to alter timbre and pitch of various piano strings, "composing" his instrument as well as his music.

– Peter Bartok, Moses Asch, Marian Distler and Sidney Cowell,  
from *Henry Cowell Piano Music*, Folkways 3349, 1963

### **Anger Dance (1914)**

The *Anger Dance* was composed at a time when I had been very much annoyed by the fact that a doctor, to whom I showed a bent-up leg, suggested that it should be cut off immediately. And since I didn't in the least approve of this and thinking of it over and over again made me more and more angry, I stomped home on my crutches, and the phrases of the *Anger Dance* went through my mind louder and louder as I walked home.

– Henry Cowell

### **How Old Is Song? (1931)**

At some time in 1930 or early 1931, Cowell returned to a successful piano work, *Aeolian Harp*, and refashioned it as *How Old is Song?* He wrote a melody for one of his father's free-verse poems, using the piano work as a harmonic background. The poem muses on what the first music might have been while the string piano evokes whispering winds, the sound of harps, and "wild prehistoric melodies." The premiere of the song was given by soprano Judith Litante, accompanied by Cowell, in Town Hall on March 9, 1931, in a recital that also included performances of *Where She Lies* and *Manaunaun's Birthing*. In 1942, Cowell returned to *How Old is Song?*, arranging it as a violin and piano work for Joseph Szigeti who championed

THE MacDowell Club  
OF NEW YORK CITY  
166 EAST 73rd STREET

SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 12th, at Eight-thirty o'clock

THE COMMITTEE ON MUSIC

presents

A Program of Modern American Music

SOLOISTS

Judith Litante, soprano  
Rudians Pazmor, contralto  
Gerald V. McGarrath, flutist  
Harrison Potter, pianist

John Kirkpatrick, pianist  
Olara Freedman, accompanist  
Henry Cowell, accompanist  
Elie Siegmeister, accompanist

PROGRAM

1. Piano Pieces, Op. 21 ..... Marion Bauer  
Chromatic  
Ostinato  
Toccata  
HARRISON POTTER

2. Toys (Carl Ruggles) ..... Carl Ruggles  
Four poems from the Japanese (Basho, 1644-1694) ..... John J. Becker  
Pied Beauty (Gerard Manley Hopkins) ..... Cetina Dougherty  
Theme with variations for voice and piano

The Greatest Man (Anne Collins) }  
Afterglow (James Fenimore Cooper) } ..... Charles Ives  
Ann St. (Maurice Morris) }  
Charlie Rutlage (from Cowboy Songs) }  
JUDITH LITANTE  
Accompanied by Clara Freedman

3. Piano Variations ..... Aaron Copland  
JOHN KIRKPATRICK

4. Sacco, Vanzetti ..... Ruth Crawford  
Chinaman, laundryman (H. T. Tsiang) ..... Ruth Crawford  
RUDIAN PAZMOR  
Accompanied by Elie Siegmeister

5. Suite for Flute Alone ..... Wallingford Riegger  
Moderato  
Vivace  
Molto con sentimento  
Allegro ironico  
GERALD V. MCGARRATH

6. Where she lies (Edna St. Vincent Millay) }  
How old is song (Harry Cowell) } ..... Henry Cowell  
Manaunau's Birthing (John O. Varian) }  
JUDITH LITANTE  
Accompanied by the composer

STEREWAY PIANO

Members and their guests cordially invited

Program from March 12, 1933 concert at the MacDowell Club, which included performances of *Where She Lies*, *How Old Is Song?*, and *Manaunau's Birthing* with Cowell at the piano.

language," was well acquainted with Ovid in the original. In a free verse translation of Ovid by David Slavitt, Pentheus' trunk is described as follows: "...his arms have been pulled now from their sockets...as leaves from a tree in a fall gale are stripped and strewn in a single night, the bits of his body are scattered about..." In his own poem, Pound obliquely equates the olive boughs stripped upon the ground after a passing winter to limbs scattered after the carnage of a primordial battle. (Although Charles Ives and Cowell did not meet until 1927, *April*, with its swirling arpeggios and trance-like, repetitive motives, is strikingly similar to Ives's 1921 setting of Byron, *from the "Incantation"*).

in his recitals thereafter. This is not the only instance where Cowell set his father's poetry; he wrote songs to seven other of his poems as well as setting seventeen by his mother, Clarissa Dixon.

– Robert Osborne

**Thou Art the Tree of Life (1955)**

*Thou Art the Tree of Life* (text by Edward Taylor, 1703) was Henry Cowell's contribution to the volume *American Hymns Old and New*. A project initiated by Albert Christ-Janer and published by Columbia University Press, the hymnbook is an anthology representing three centuries of American hymns, culminating in a section of new hymns commissioned from many leading American composers of the day, expressly for publication in this volume. All of the commissioned hymns, composed in the mid-1950's, were funded by Martha Baird Rockefeller.

– Josephine Gandolfi

**April (1918)**

*April* is the sole setting Cowell made of poetry by Ezra Pound (1885–1972). The poem bears the Latin inscription "Nympharum membra disjecta" which means "the scattered limbs of the nymphs." This is most likely a reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III: 274 where the Theban King Pentheus, representative of law and order, is torn apart and his limbs scattered by the intoxicated Bacchantes. Pound, who called Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* "the most beautiful book in the

– Robert Osborne

## Where She Lies (1924)

*Where She Lies*, Cowell's only setting of the American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950), is said to have been written in memory of Edna Smith: Cowell intended to marry her, but she died in an automobile accident. The published song bears a dedication to Ursula Greville, wife of the publisher Kenneth Curwen, whose firm put out the song in 1925. (Curwen was also the editor and publisher of the music journal *The Sackbut* for which Cowell wrote several articles.) Cowell sent two songs, *Where She Lies* and *The Gift of Being*, to the distinguished mezzo-soprano, Eva Gauthier (1885–1958), an ardent champion of many contemporary composers through her performances, commissions, and patronage. In the 21 April 1927 edition of *The Musical Leader*, Gauthier wrote: "Of all the songs submitted to me recently by young Americans, two by Henry Cowell stand out. First, the voice is treated as a voice [not as an instrument] with a beautiful melodic line, and he has used the piano to show off his own particular technic." Cowell wrote thanking Gauthier on 11 May 1927: "I am delighted that you are interested in the songs and should like to write one specially for you, if I might? Your mention of the songs is really of most indispensable value to me." Gauthier soon thereafter sang the premieres of both songs accompanied by pianist Celius Dougherty at Town Hall in New York on 29 December 1927. An unsympathetic review of the published song from *Musical Times* (1926) states: "The music of this song...demands a full page of explanation of symbols for tone-clusters, sympathetic vibrations, fists and forearms; and as no relevant result emerges from all the effort, one is inclined to feel it out of proportion. The music may mean something to some people. My ears are not attuned to it, and to me it means nothing."

– Robert Osborne

## The Pasture (1944)

### Spring Pools (1958)

Cowell wrote three settings of Robert Frost (1874–1963): these two solo songs and a choral setting of "Fire and Ice" for men's voices and band. On New Year's Eve of 1944 the Cowells were celebrating at home in Shady, New York. Cowell disappeared for three quarters of an hour during the festivities and returned with a newly composed song, *The Pasture*. Sidney sang it for their guests. *The Pasture* was formally premiered in a concert of contemporary music presented by the Common Council for American Unity in New York; Cowell accompanied the soprano Rose Walter. There is also a setting of this poem by Charles Naginski. In *Spring Pools* Cowell divides Frost's poem into three sections, the central being distinguished by dark, cluster-like chords which are totally unrelated to the vocal line whereas the outer sections are clear, cold, and spare in both the vocal line and accompaniment.

– Robert Osborne

## Rest (1933)

Catherine Riegger, who provided the texts for *Sunset* and *Rest*, was the daughter of Cowell's good friend, the composer Wallingford Riegger. The first noted performance was given by the contralto Radiana Pazmor (1892–1969) in a program of modern songs presented on September 26, 1933 at the studio of Doris Barr in the Russian Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. *Rest* was described in a review of the concert as having a "melody of interesting design—the vocal score suggesting concentric curves. It was written...in Persian and Arabian folk idioms." *Rest* makes telling use of glissandi and graphic notation in the vocal line. In 1934, *Rest* was broadcast by radio to Moscow along with works by Ives, MacDowell, Gershwin, Copland, Gruenberg, and Piston. These songs were the only songs of his own which Cowell published in *New Music*.

– Robert Osborne

## Song in the Songless (1921)

*Song in the Songless* is the only setting Cowell made of verse by the English novelist and poet George Meredith (1828–1909). It was composed between May and December of 1921; the poem is from Meredith's volume, *A Reading of Life, with Other Poems*.

– Robert Osborne

## Quartet Euphometric (1916–19)

*Quartet Euphometric* and *Quartet Romantic* form a conceptual pair, composed in California, when Cowell was devising his complex “rhythm-harmony” method of composition. The method, which Cowell would later describe in detail in *New Musical Resources*, relies on the principle of corresponding harmonic relationships with rhythmic relationships:

“The possibility of a demonstrable physical identity between rhythm and harmony occurred to me when I entered the University of California in the fall of 1914 and was faced for the first time with an actual textbook in music theory, the famous *Foote and Spalding*” (Arthur Foote and W. R. Spalding, *Modern Harmony*, 1905). Since both rhythm and the intervals between pitches are measured by numbers it is possible to correlate the two. The interval of an octave is formed by two sets of vibrations-per-second in a ratio of 1:2; thus if middle C is 270 vibrations-per-second, the next C above would be 540. Transferred into rhythm, an octave would be represented by two notes against one. A perfect fifth would be three notes against two, a perfect fourth four against three, etc.

In *Quartet Euphometric*, chords are converted into relationships of meters. Thus a triad with the ratio of pitch intervals 2:3:5 would convert to three instrumental lines each in its own meter: one in 2/4, one in 3/4, and one in 5/4. Only occasionally would the bar lines of all voices coincide, creating another kind of rhythmic complexity. As in *Quartet Romantic*, the complex rhythms that are derived by this method are given new pitches that are not in the tonal style of the original model but are in an atonal relationship to one another. Unlike the frequently disjunct melodies of the Viennese atonalists Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern these lines are primarily conjunct, or stepwise.

“Both quartets are polyphonic, and each melodic strand has its own rhythm,” wrote the composer in an extended preface to the published score. “The *Quartet Euphometric* (‘euphonious meters’) has a spare polyphonic structure, but there are accents which give a different rhythmic grouping to each part.” The rhythm-harmony system was one of many ideas being advanced during the 1910s for overthrowing long-established compositional traditions in Western music. Cowell was keenly aware of this and positioned himself within an international movement. “Since I used all twelve tones freely, the pieces are atonal,” Cowell asserted in this same preface. “But unlike the atonal styles then developing abroad (with which I only became acquainted later), the melodic lines are more often conjunct than not, and the vertical combinations use consonance as well as dissonance in varying degrees, not, of course, conventionally resolved.” He claimed the intention of both works was to be “flowing and lyrical” rather than “severe or harsh, or ejaculatory,” and to create “something human that would sound warm and rich and somewhat rubato.”

Cowell felt that these works, and others of the same period, were beyond human performance capabilities. He did not envision the “new virtuosos” who perform new works today. It is striking how prophetic these explorations were of music after World War II. Cowell's rhythms of 1915-19 are remarkably like passages in Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie* (1949) or the procedures Elliott Carter developed from the early fifties beginning with the First String Quartet (1951) or the works of Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz

Stockhausen around the same time. Feeling the works to be unperformable, Cowell wished to devise an instrument that could play complex rhythms. However, lack of funds forced him to delay until 1929, when he worked in New York with Leon Theremin, the Russian inventor of the electronic instrument that bears his name, on a machine called the Rhythmicon. It was completed in 1931. Theremin later made a second, improved model for Nicolas Slonimsky, who in turn sold it to Joseph Schillinger, the composer and teacher who developed a mathematical method for musical composition. Schillinger later gave this Rhythmicon to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

– compiled from notes by Carol Oja, Phillip Ramey, and Jean Dane

#### **String Quartet No. 4 “United” (1936)**

Cowell's *United Quartet* was his most elaborate attempt, up to that time, to integrate musical materials and techniques of whose stylistic disparity he was entirely aware, but of whose relationship in terms of pure music he was convinced. This preoccupation was not new with him, but the *United Quartet* uses more different kinds of ideas together, combined in a rather more obvious way, than before. This was Cowell's response to the music-for-the-people movement then prevalent. He was trying in his own way to widen the appeal of contemporary music, broadening the sources of his materials by using types of musical patterns common to many people; but he was trying also to avoid the trap inherent in “popular” music, which deliberately produces only familiar types of music as far as it can.

When the *United Quartet* was first printed, a statement written by the composer in a spirit of some exasperation was included. His *avant-garde* colleagues had begun to be shocked by the increasingly listenable quality of much of his music, while the average concert-goer found too much that was startling still. So he undertook to set both parties straight about his intention, in the first articulate expression of his concern about music meaningful to many kinds of hearers.

“The *United Quartet* is an attempt toward a more universal music style,” the composer begins. “Although it is unique in form, style and content, it is easy to understand because of its use of fundamental elements as a basis, because of repetitions which enable the auditor to become accustomed to these elements, because of the clarity and simplicity of its form, and because of the unity of form, rhythm and melody.

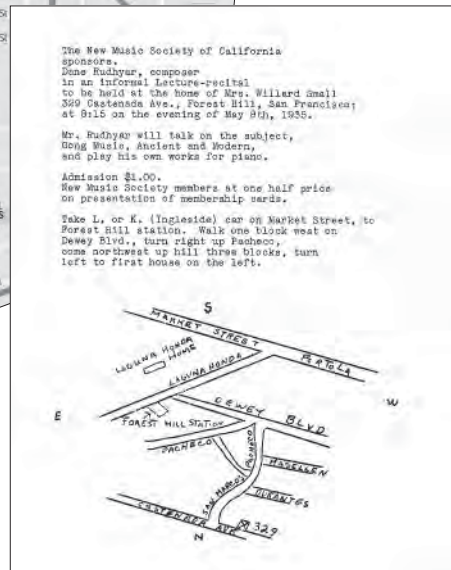
“There are in it elements suggested from many places and periods. For example, the classical feeling is represented not by the employment of a familiar classic form, but in building up a new form, carefully planned. ...Primitive music is represented, not by imitating it, nor by taking a specific melody or rhythm from some tribe, but by using a three-tone scale, and exhausting all the different ways the three tones can appear, which is a procedure of some primitive music. ...The Oriental is represented by modes which are constructed as Oriental modes are constructed, without being actual modes used in particular cultures. ...The modern is represented by the use of unresolved discords, by free intervals in two-part counterpoint, and,” concludes the composer with triumphant logic, “by the fact that the whole result is something new—and all that is new is modern!”

The *United Quartet* demonstrates another early interest of Cowell's, one that is widespread today: the tightening of the musical relationship in a work by applying a single basic formula to all possible elements of a piece. Here, for instance, the foundation rhythm of five (– – . . .) is repeated in the dynamic pattern (since successive movements begin loud, loud, soft, loud, soft), and in the ground tones of the movements (which run C, C, G, C, G).

– David Hall

# HENRY COWELL IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

Photograph of Cowell with his mother in front of Menlo Park home, 3" x 5", 1911



The New Music Society of California sponsors. Dane Rudhyar, composer in an informal Lecture-recital to be held at the home of Mrs. Willard Small 329 Castaneda Ave., Forest Hill, San Francisco at 8:15 on the evening of May 8th, 1935.

Mr. Rudhyar will talk on the subject, Gregorio Mendel, Schubert and Debussy, and play his own works for piano.

Admission \$1.00. New Music Society members at one half price on presentation of membership cards.

Take L. or K. (Ingraveside) car on Market Street, to Forest Hill station. Walk one block west on Dewey Blvd., turn right up Babcock, come northwest up hill three blocks, turn left to first house on the left.

Flyer for May 8, 1935 lecture-recital advertising Dane Rudhyar, presented by the New Music Society in San Francisco's Forest Hill neighborhood.



- 1 **California Street & Grant Avenue, San Francisco:** 136 St. Anne's Street no longer exists near this corner. Once the site of the Rudolph Schaeffer Studios, several public concerts and social occasions for New Music Society members were held here from at least 1928–1931.
- 2 **2490 Castro Street, San Francisco:** Henry Cowell lived here for many years in a house built by his father. (The address no longer exists.) Early San Francisco telephone directories list his as Henry Cowell's address, with the occupation of journalist.
- 3 **1950 Jones Street, San Francisco:** The home of Harry and Olive Cowell, Henry's father and stepmother. The address was also used by the *New Music Quarterly* when it began publication in 1927, offering an annual subscription of 4 issues for \$2. The *Quarterly* published a total of 35 issues, including 58 works and 40 composers.
- 4 **166 Geary Street, San Francisco:** In 1929 this building was the Gallerie Beaux Arts, and the site of a New Music Society recital featuring pianist Dene Denny. Ms. Denny, an art gallery owner in Carmel, managed Henry Cowell's New Music business while he taught at the New School for Social Research in New York.
- 5 **620 Sutter Street, San Francisco:** The auditorium of the YWCA was the site of numerous New Music Society concerts, and a lecture series directed by Cowell.
- 6 **Sutter & Mason Streets, San Francisco:** In the early 1930s, The Community Playhouse located here was the site of several New Music Society concerts. A May 1934 concert with orchestra and Betty Hort's dance group in "machine-age" costumes had a highest ticket price of \$1.50.
- 7 **1079 Filbert Street, San Francisco:** The studio of Doris Barr, this was the site of several Society programs in 1933 and 1934.
- 8 **War Memorial, Veterans Auditorium, San Francisco:** On 7 March 1935, the New Music Society presented Schoenberg conducting his own compositions.
- 9 **171 San Marcos Avenue, San Francisco:** The home of Henry Cowell's stepmother Olive was here, after his parents' divorce in 1903. Henry used this address when he went to prison in 1936.
- 10 **San Quentin, Marin County:** Henry Cowell was imprisoned here on morals charges in 1936 and served four years. During his incarceration he taught, composed, and wrote two unpublished books on melody and rhythm. Cowell was paroled in 1940 largely as the result of a spirited campaign led by his stepmother, Olive Cowell, and Sidney Hawkins Robertson, and pardoned in 1942.
- 11 **Mills College, Oakland:** Henry Cowell gave a series of lectures at Mills College in 1933. Cowell was to become better known as a lecturer than as a performer.
- 12 **University of California, Berkeley: Music Department:** Henry Cowell entered UC Berkeley in the fall of 1914, studying composition under Charles Seeger. Seeger considered Cowell brilliant, and so made special arrangements for his admission in spite of Cowell's lack of formal secondary education. For the next 3 years, their work focused on the use of dissonance. Under Seeger's tutelage, Cowell developed a systematic technique for the use of unusual musical material, and built up a repertoire of his own innovations. Cowell credited Seeger with "the gift of a framework for my thinking as a composer." Seeger and Cowell became lifelong friends, although Seeger complained that Cowell used some of his ideas, for which his "liberal friends" never gave him credit.
- 13 **2156 Harkins Avenue, Menlo Park:** Henry Cowell's birthplace in 1897 and his home for many years. It was sold in 1936; the original home no longer exists.
- 14 **Menlo Park Train Station:** As a boy, Henry would gather ferns and flowers from the hills surrounding Menlo Park and Palo Alto, and offer them for sale at this train station, one of the earliest built in California and, in the early 1900s, the main arrival point for riders to and from San Francisco.

# HENRY COWELL: THE WHOLE WORLD OF MUSIC CONCERT 2

Friday, November 13, 2009

Presidio Chapel, Building 130, Fisher Loop, San Francisco

## Panel Discussion (7pm):

Anahid Ajemian, George Avakian, Sarah Cahill,  
John Duffy, Joel Sachs; Charles Amirkhanian (moderator)

•

## Prelude for Organ (1925)

### Processional (1944)

Sandra Soderlund, organ

•

## Set of Five (1952)

Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio

•

## Manaunaun's Birthing\* (1924)

### Song in the Songless\* (1921)

### Rest (1933)

## Three Songs on Texts by Padraic Colum:

### Crane, I Heard in the Night, Night-Fliers (1956)

### Music I Heard (1961)

### Music When Soft Voices Die (1922)

Wendy Hillhouse, mezzo-soprano

Josephine Gandolfi, piano

•

## Rhythmicana (1938)

### The Banshee (1925)

### The Fairy Answer (1929)

### Tiger (1928)

Sarah Cahill, piano

## INTERMISSION

## Ground & Fuguing Tune\* (1955)

### Hymn & Fuguing Tune No. 14 (1962)

Sandra Soderlund, organ

•

## Sonata for Violin & Piano (1945)

David Abel, violin

Julie Steinberg, piano

•

## Quartet Euphometric (1916–1919)

### String Quartet No. 5 (1955–6)

Colorado String Quartet

*\*These works are unpublished and performed by permission of The David and Sylvia Teitelbaum Fund, Inc., from the Cowell Collection at the New York Public Library*



Anahid Ajemian, Henry Cowell, and Maro Ajemian

**Prelude for Organ (1925)**  
**Processional (1944)**

The four organ works of Henry Cowell span over thirty years. The earliest is the short, lyric *Prelude*, written in 1925. It is in a trio texture except for one short passage, and seems to be for a worship service. The *Processional* was written in 1944 for Warren D. Allen, then choral director at Stanford University. It is in the English cathedral style associated with composers like Sir William Walton.

– Sandra Soderlund

**Set of Five (1952)**

*Set of Five* for violin, piano and percussion was composed in 1952 at the request of Anahid and Maro Ajemian. This duo recorded the work in the 1950s with percussionist Elden Bailey for the MGM label.

The first movement, *Largo sostenuto*, employs five gongs of different sizes in a rhythmic “continuo.” The gongs are placed rim down on a table, which is covered by a blanket to produce a muted, dry tone. The musical material is reminiscent of the Hymn style of the Hymns and Fuguing Tunes.

The *Allegro* is a brief, light-hearted movement in perpetual motion style, which blends violin, piano, and xylophone into a single colour; a contrasting Trio exploits lower-pitched sounds with startling effect.

The central movement, *Andante*, resembles a baroque *cantabile* but features a very un-baroque accompaniment of Indian tablas or tom-toms.

The fourth movement, *Presto leggiero*, is another perpetual-motion affair—perhaps a modern *Flight of the Bumble Bee*. The percussionist may use any sharp sounding percussion instruments here or any substitute of similar quality, like glass or porcelain bowls, as long as sounds of six distinctly different pitches can be produced.

The majestic finale, *Vigoroso*, encapsulates Cowell's career, with tone-clusters, harmonics on the piano strings, non-western percussion, tonal harmonies, and unabashed songfulness.

– adapted from notes by Edward Cole, Marvin Rosen, and Joel Sachs

### **Manaunaun's Birthing (1924)**

In *Manaunaun's Birthing* Cowell again turns to Irish mythology and the god of motion and of the waves of the sea, who had appeared in *The Tides of Manaunaun*, the introduction for piano solo to *The Building of Bamba*, his 1917 operatic collaboration with Varian. The textures represent “with massive chord clusters the waters and all matter rolling through boundless space ahead of Manaunaun's powerful sweeps.” In a recording of Cowell playing his piano works he says in his introductory remarks: “In Irish mythology, Manaunaun was the god of motion and of the waves of the sea. And according to the mythology, at the time when the universe was being built, Manaunaun swayed all of the materials out of which the universe was being built with fine particles which were distributed everywhere through Cosmos. And he kept these moving in rhythmical tides so that they should remain fresh when the time came for their use in the building of the universe.” In 1944 Cowell arranged this song for orchestra and band—presumably to be played on radio—but the score was lost and no records have been found to confirm the radio broadcast. This song is dedicated to “B.W.W.,” Blanche Wetherill Walton (1871–1963), Cowell's foremost patron and adherent over the years. Cowell dedicated five other works to her between 1924 and 1961: *Ensemble*, *How Come?*, *Euphoria*, *Merry Christmas for Blanche*, and *Birthday Melody for Blanche*.

– Robert Osborne

### **Song in the Songless (1921)**

*Song in the Songless* is the only setting Cowell made of verse by the English novelist and poet George Meredith (1828–1909). It was composed between May and December of 1921; the poem is from Meredith's volume, *A Reading of Life, with Other Poems*.

– Robert Osborne

### **Rest (1933)**

Catherine Riegger, who provided the texts for *Sunset* and *Rest*, was the daughter of Cowell's good friend, the composer Wallingford Riegger. The first noted performance was given by the contralto Radiana Pazmor in a program of modern songs presented on September 26, 1933 at the studio of Doris Barr in the Russian Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. *Rest* was described in a review of the concert as having a “melody of interesting design—the vocal score suggesting concentric curves. It was written...in Persian and Arabian folk idioms.” *Rest* makes telling use of glissandi and graphic notation in the vocal line. In 1934, *Rest* was broadcast by radio to Moscow along with works by Ives, MacDowell, Gershwin, Copland, Gruenberg, and Piston. These songs were the only songs of his own which Cowell published in *New Music*.

– Robert Osborne

## Three Songs on Texts by Padraic Colum (1956)

### Crane

#### I Heard in the Night

#### Night-Fliers

*Three Songs on Poems of Padraic Colum* were dedicated to Cowell's stepmother, Olive Cowell, his father's third wife. Cowell chose three poems with references to different birds by the Irish-born poet and playwright Padraic Colum (1881–1972). Even though Colum settled in the United States, living in New York and Connecticut after 1939, his verse was rooted in Irish rural life. According to Sidney Cowell, the settings Cowell wrote of Colum's verse never achieved circulation, despite their quality, because of conflict between the two performing rights societies: ASCAP (Colum) and BMI (Cowell). The earliest documented performance of the three songs was that by Margaret Ahrens, soprano, and Paul Alan Levi, pianist, at Merkin Hall on 12 May 1983. *I Heard in the Night* is an example of Cowell's flexible scoring principles in that it can be performed as a duet for voice with either piano, viola, or clarinet accompaniment.

– Robert Osborne

## Music I Heard (1961)

The tenor Joseph McCall studied "Theory of Composition" under Cowell at the Peabody Conservatory in the late 1950's. Some years later, when pursuing doctoral studies at the Eastman School of Music, McCall encountered Cowell over a meal in his dormitory. When McCall bemoaned the fact that the composers at Eastman were reluctant to write songs, Cowell offered to write one for McCall if he would provide a few favorite poems. McCall gave Cowell several poems culled out of various anthologies, including *Music I Heard* by Conrad Aiken (1889–1973). The resultant song, which McCall describes as "a very expressive song from the simplest of means" was premiered by McCall on 31 July 1961 at a noontime recital. Sidney Cowell wrote in 1963: "Aiken proved to be an ASCAP member and as Henry's membership in ACA (and their contract with BMI as well as his own) prevents any publication except with BMI publishers, nothing could be done with this song." There are settings of this poem by Richard Hageman, Paul Nordhoff, and Leonard Bernstein.

– Robert Osborne

## Music When Soft Voices Die (1922)

*Music When Soft Voices Die* is the last of five settings Cowell made of poetry by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822). Only the manuscripts of this song and *To a Skylark* remain; the other three, *Dirge*, *Weep for the World's Woe*, and *Love's Philosophy*, are lost. This poem has also been set to music by Quincy Porter, Samuel Barber, and David Diamond.

– Robert Osborne

## Rhythmicana (1938)

*Rhythmicana* is a three-movement solo piano work composed while Cowell was in prison. It was dedicated to and first performed by the composer and pianist Johanna Beyer (1888–1944). The piece further explores the complicated rhythmic relationships Cowell discussed in his *New Musical Resources*, in which, as Mauricio Kagel described, "the systematic inter-relationship of notes was transferred to the field of tempo, rhythm and dynamics."

*Rhythmicana* was also an early name of a previous work by Cowell, *Concerto for Rhythmicon and Orchestra*, involving the Rhythmicon, an instrument created by Cowell and Leon Theremin. Fearing that the complex rhythms of his *Quartet Romantic* and *Quartet Euphometric* would be

"unperformable by any known human agency and... purely fanciful," Cowell had developed this instrument using intermittent light on a photo-electric cell.

The first movement of *Rhythmicana*, labeled *Impetuously*, employs an ostinato-like figure of five plus four eighth notes in each measure. The right hand, meanwhile, provides contrasting divisions of the beat, in groupings of three, five, six, seven, and occasionally nine (across two measures), although the two hands do coincide rhythmically at the start of most measures. The complexity increases in the second movement, *Andante*, incorporating groupings of eleven and thirteen, and changing subdivisions in both hands, in nearly every measure. Like all three movements in *Rhythmicana*, the *Andante* is in A-B-A form.

Whereas the first two movements use subdivisions of each measure to juxtapose two rhythms, the third movement, *Allegro vivace*, employs distinct time signatures with a common pulse. In the opening section, the right hand is grouped in three-beat measures, while the left-hand motors along in five-beat measures, meaning that the phrases of the two hands coincide for a "downbeat" once in every fifteen beats. The two rhythmic figures exchange registers in the middle section, which features more propulsive figures and shorter phrases before a return to the opening material to conclude the piece.

– Adam Fong, adapted from notes by Stacy Barcelos and Oliver Daniel

### **The Banshee (1925)**

*The Banshee*, although not originally intended as a programmatic work, has become inextricable from the image of an Irish spirit that wails at the time of a death. While an assistant depresses the right pedal, the pianist works inside the open piano like a witch over a cauldron, strumming and stroking it to conjure up proto-electronic sounds.

– Joel Sachs

Henry Cowell's comments from the 1963 Folkways LP *Henry Cowell Piano Music*:  
The Banshee is an Irish family ghost, a woman of the inner world the word means. And she will be an ancestor of yours who is charged with the duty of taking your soul into the inner world when you die. So when you die she has to come to the outer plain for this purpose. But she finds the outer plain very uncomfortable and unpleasant, so you will hear her wailing at the time of a death in your family, while she's there for the purpose of taking your soul back into the inner world or whatever member of the family it might be. On *The Banshee*, the sounds are obtained by the player standing at the back of the piano with the pedal open, and the coils on the lower bass strings are played on horizontally. If the piano is in tune, this will produce a very eerie sound roughly four octaves above the keyboard sound with a strange tone quality of its own, and with the possibility of wailing sounds which will be heard. There are, of course, many slight variations in the method of producing this, all of which are given in the printed music, which, finally, was accomplished triumphantly after a great many trials and errors in ways in which these curious sounds might be notated.

### **The Fairy Answer (1929)**

*The Fairy Answer* was composed after a visit to my grandfather's place in Kildare. An old gardener took me to a certain spot, a glen, and he said, 'I hear you're a musician now,' and I said yes, and he said, 'Well if you'll play your music in one end of the glen, the fairies will come out and answer you from the other end of the glen with their own.' And he looked at me rather quizzically and he said, 'Of course, if you're very materialistic you might think it was an echo. But then in order that you should know it was not an echo, they always change the music about just a little bit, so that you will know it's they themselves.'

–Henry Cowell

## Tiger (1928)

The piece was originally suggested by William Blake's "Tiger, tiger, burning bright..." In an atonal, dissonant style, this is a set of variations on two themes stated in the first few measures: one with small intervals, the other with widely separated intervals. There are many different kinds of clusters, some of which are used silently to bring out high overtones, as are also some small chords. Cowell performed the piece in 1929 as the first American composer to visit the Soviet Union, where it was published.

– adapted from notes by Joel Sachs, Peter Bartok, Moses Asch, Marian Distler and Sidney Cowell

## Ground & Fuguing Tune (1955)

*Ground & Fuguing Tune* was written for Marilyn Mason and first performed by her in New York City in 1956. It is in two separate movements; the first, as indicated by its title, is a set of continuous variations over a repeating bass line. The ground bass appears nine times, but at different pitch levels and at different speeds. The Fuguing Tune develops its lively figures in three voices that often intermingling and cross.

– Sandra Soderlund

## Hymn & Fuguing Tune No. 14 (1962)

*Hymn & Fuguing Tune No. 14* was commissioned by Lincoln Center in New York in 1962. It actually contains two hymn melodies, one like the shape-note hymns that Cowell knew from New Southern Harmony, and the other a more conventional hymn like those found in

Protestant hymnals. There are also two fuguing tunes, the first very quick and sprightly and the second more moderate in tempo. All of these elements are presented as part of one large movement that closes with a majestic reprise of the first hymn.

– Sandra Soderlund

MADELEINE CARABO  
VIOLINIST

Assisted by  
CAROL ROBINSON  
PIANIST

TIMES HALL  
248 WEST 44 STREET, NEW YORK

Thursday Evening, April 29, 1948 at 8:30 P. M.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN RECITAL

I.  
Sonata (for N. Y. performers) . . . . . HENRY COWELL  
Hymn  
In Popping Style  
Ballad  
Jig  
Finale

II.  
Sonatina for violin and piano . . . . . ULYSSES KAY

III.  
[FOR VIOLIN ALONE]  
Sonata, Op. 31, No. 2 . . . . . HINDEMITH  
Elegia . . . . . STRAVINSKY  
Chromatic Capriccio (Unaccompanied Madeleine Carabo Solo) . . . . . HAROLD S. CONE

INTERMISSION

IV.  
\*Third Sonata . . . . . CHARLES IVES  
Adagio  
Allegro (Farrar's Barn Dance in a Winter Night)  
Adagio Cantabile

V.  
\*Tocatta — Fourth Movement of Sonata (for N. Y. performers) . . . . . ROY HARRIS  
STEINWAY PIANO

\*The Third Sonata by Charles Ives and the Roy Harris Sonata for Violin and Piano were given their New York Performances by MADELEINE CARABO and CAROL ROBINSON at Times Hall, November 11, 1948. The Roy Harris Sonata for Violin and Piano was originally published as three separate pieces by Mills Music, Inc. The Tocatta is the new final movement.

Program from April 29, 1948 concert at Times Hall, where the program included the New York premiere of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, with Madeleine Carabo (violin)

## Sonata for Violin & Piano (1945)

### I. Hymn, II. In Fuguing Style, III. Ballad, IV. Jig, V. Finale

About 1942 I came across William Walker's *Southern Harmony*, one of the handbooks of the singing schools that flourished in post-Revolutionary America, and that may still be found here and there in the South. This old book circulated great numbers of the fine old modal British-American ballad tunes, adapted to religious texts, and it contained some fuguing tunes from earlier New England "primitive" composers like Billings, Edson, Read and others. The music is plain but fervent. The fuguing tunes rarely use the modes, and they differ from Baroque in being extremely condensed in length yet freer, and for each

voice may have a tune of its own although the voices (usually three) enter one after another. They tend to stay closer to the tonic than European music does, also.

I found myself wondering what turn music in the United States might have taken if this widespread style had not disappeared from the knowledge of sophisticated musicians in this country who scorned anything that did not conform to the European standards for over a hundred years.

It was not with the idea of imitation, but rather of carrying forward into a more extended and modern form some of the basic elements in this old religious music that I began to write a series of pieces in two parts, the first a hymn, the second a fuguing tune, often both modal; they were for various combinations of instruments and voices. Later on the idea grew in me to extend the fuguing tune into sonata form by developing two themes. Such a work would then logically find the basis for the other movements in other types of traditional American music. The present sonata is the result. The work was undertaken in 1944 at the suggestion of Joseph Szigeti who recorded it with pianist Carlo Bussotti for Columbia Records.

– Henry Cowell

### **Quartet Euphometric (1916)**

See page 22.

### **String Quartet No. 5 (1955–6)**

Cowell's *String Quartet No. 5* was commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation of the Library of Congress. Written in New York City during the spring and summer of 1956 it had its first public performance by the Juilliard String Quartet at Coolidge Auditorium, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., in October 1956. It was revised and published in 1962. The work is in five movements: *Lento*; *Allegro*; *Andante*; *Presto*; *Largo-Allegro marcato*.

The Fifth Quartet is a comparatively elaborate development from the styles of eighteenth century American hymnody that Cowell began about 1941 to build into the series of neo-Baroque hymns, paired with fuguing tunes, which are now widely associated with his name. This rural religious tradition carried the three-part modal hymns and the fuguing tunes of the earliest English and Scottish Reformation churches first to New England, from where it spread into the South and West. Until the radio radically changed our country music in the early 1930's, this tradition, perpetuating musical styles whose history can be traced back more than 300 years in Europe, was loved and actively practiced by more tens of thousands of Americans than any other—a fact of which sophisticated musicians in American cities were entirely unaware.

Cowell wondered what this fine old music might have become in the hands of American composers if nineteenth century musical conventions had not taught them to consider it crude and strange. So, by way of answering the question, each of his hymns and fuguing tunes is a different experiment in carrying forward, into twentieth century music, elements drawn from this early music. ...The diatonic modal materials (but no actual tunes) are developed by means of a variety of related techniques that were acquired by Western music subsequent to the tradition's arrival in this country, and the treatment has proven to be increasingly dissonant and even chromatic in Cowell's hands. But the music is never atonal, since Cowell believes that the possibilities inherent in the immense variety of tonal systems in the world are far from having come to an end.

The present quartet is diatonic, but there is free interchange among modes and keys, and constantly flowing modulation in certain parts of the work. The counterpoint is harmonic, quartal or tertial in some places, secundal in others; it is sometimes dissonant and other times



consonant. There is no extra-musical connotation. The composer says of the work: "It is just some music I felt I wanted to write."

The opening *Lento* is a much-modified hymn, in which the voices start together, low in the bass and high in the treble, moving toward each other as they approach the ends of phrases, and descending together into unison at the end of the movement. The second movement, *Allegro*, is a rapid *stretto*, vigorous and definite in mood; it makes energetic use of secundal counterpoint. The third movement, *Andante*, is gentle by contrast: a soft diatonic melody is colored by still softer chords in seconds.

The *Presto* is a rapid scherzo in asymmetrical rhythm, whose typical four-measure phrase contains two bars of 6/8, one of 9/8 and one of 6/8 again. That is to say, the typical phrase consists of a pattern of 2 plus 2 plus 3 plus 2 beats. This movement opens in E minor, but within the first fourteen measures the music overflows, in a series of rapid modulations, into G Mixolydian, E Dorian, B Dorian, A major, F# minor, A Mixolydian, F# minor again, and F# Phrygian. The harmonic basis may be tertial, or secundal as in the rapid chromatic runs.

The last movement is in the manner of a hymn-and-fuguing tune. Its *Largo* is a development of the opening movement, whose tertial harmony unexpectedly borrows forbidden behavior from modal harmony, in the form of consecutive fifths and modal passing tones. The faster fuguing tune reverts twice to the slower pace of a hymn phrase before it acquires the momentum that carries its development of themes from earlier movements forcefully ahead to the work's conclusion.

– From the jacket of Columbia Records LP MS 6388, produced by Paul Myers, featuring The Beaux-Arts String Quartet, 1962

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OF  
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(Affiliated with the "International  
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FIRST CONCERT  
THURSDAY  
October 22nd, at 8:15 P. M.  
at the Ballroom of the  
BILTMORE HOTEL

PROGRAM

---

SONATE for two violins and piano - - - DARIUS MILHAUD  
Violins: Henry Eichheim, Calmon Lubevicki  
Piano: Ethel Roe Eichheim

---

ANGELS - - - - - CARL RUGGLES  
(2 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos)

OCTANDRE - - - - - EDGAR VARESE  
(Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, French Horn,  
Trombone, Double Bass)

The Little Symphony, Henry Eichheim, directing

---

Improvisation - - - - - FEODOR KOLIN

---

MUSINGS OF A PIANO - - - - - LEO ORNSTEIN  
1. The Professor walks by  
2. The Piano thinks out loud  
3. The music lesson and the complaining child  
4. I wish I knew

SECHS KLEINE KLAVIERSTUCKE - ARNOLD SCHOENBERG  
Wesley Kuhnle

---

THE SURGE OF FIRE - - - - - D. RUDHYAR  
Symphonic Trilogy  
(Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, French Horn,  
Trombone, String Quartet, 3 Pianos)

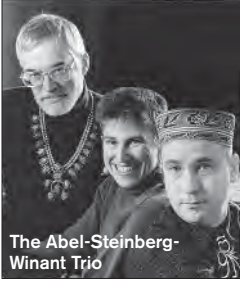
The Little Symphony, Adolph Tandler, directing, with the cooperation  
of Winifred Hooke, Wesley Kuhnle, Homer Simmons, pianists.

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KNABE Pianos

Pages from Concert Program for the first California concert presentation of the New Music Society, October 22, 1925, at the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, featuring music of Leo Ornstein, Darius Milhaud, Dane Rudhyar, and Edgar Varèse

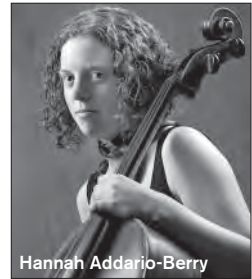
# PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES



The Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio

**The Abel-Steinberg-Winant Trio** (David Abel, violin; Julie Steinberg, piano; William Winant, percussion) was formed in 1984 and is dedicated to the performances of Music from the Americas, Pacific Rim, and Northwest Asia. The Trio has commissioned over twenty composers including Terry Riley, Somei Satoh, Daniel Lentz, Lou Harrison, John Harbison, Paul Dresher and Frederic Rzewski. The Trio has collaborated closely with various composers including a tour in 1986 with Gordon Mumma and Lou Harrison. Their recording of Lou Harrison's *La Koro Sutro* on New Albion was hailed by *The New York Times* as one of the ten best albums of 1988. They have performed throughout the United States, Canada and Japan to critical acclaim, including the Brooklyn Academy of Music's "Next Wave Festival", Library of Congress, Chamber Music West, Cabrillo Music Festival, Ravinia Music Festival, UCLA Center for the Arts and Lincoln Center. Their concerts have been broadcast by National Public Radio, WNYC, KPFA, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ("2 New Hours") and DRS2 (National Radio of Switzerland).

**Hannah Addario-Berry** grew up in British Columbia, Canada, and fell in love with the cello at age nine. She has a Masters Degree in Chamber Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, a Bachelors Degree in Cello Performance from McGill University, and diplomas in performance and pedagogy from the Victoria Conservatory of Music. Since joining San Francisco's Del Sol String Quartet in 2006, she has premiered more than twenty works, and collaborated with eminent performers and composers such as Joan Jeanrenaud, Stephen Kent, Wu Man, Peter Sculthorpe, Per Norgard, Kui Dong, Chinary Ung, Hyo-Shin Na, etc. A versatile chamber musician, Hannah has performed at the Other Minds Festival, Switchboard Music Festival, Kneisel Hall, Casalmaggiore Music Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, and the Domaine Forget Music Academy. In 2006, she was a featured soloist in the Blueprint New Music series for the American premiere of Brian Cherney's cello concerto *Apparitions*. In addition, she has performed with many renowned artists such as Menahem Pressler, Ian Swensen, Catherine Manson, Jean-Michel Fonteneau, Paul Hersh, and Jodi Levitz.



Hannah Addario-Berry

Hannah brings her passion for music beyond the concert stage, performing at bars and cafes as a member of Classical Revolution, and as the founder and host of Cello Bazaar, a monthly cello happening at her neighborhood café. She also has an active teaching studio for cello and chamber music.



Anahid Ajemian

**Anahid Ajemian**, violinist, did much to promote the work of American composers beginning in the 1940s, giving frequent performances of new compositions together with her sister, the pianist Maro Ajemian, and touring the United States, Canada, and Europe. Among the composers who wrote for them are John Cage, Henry Cowell, Alan Hovhaness, Ernst Krenek, Lou Harrison, Wallingford Riegger, Carlos Surinach, and Ben Weber. Anahid and Maro Ajemian were the first instrumentalists to receive the Laurel Leaf Award from the American Composers Alliance, for their "distinguished service to American music." Also during the 1940s, the two co-founded the New York City-based organization Friends of Armenian Music Committee, which did much to launch the career of composer Alan Hovhaness, via a series of well received New York concerts of his music. Anahid was also a member of the Composers Quartet, and taught at Columbia University.

**George Avakian** is an American record producer and executive known particularly for his work with Columbia Records, and his production of albums by Miles Davis and other notable jazz musicians. He was born in Armavir, Russian Federation, to Armenian parents. He attended Yale University, and became an avid collector and fan of jazz music. While still at Yale he was responsible for the first reissues Columbia put out around 1940, discovering some unissued Louis Armstrong masters from his Hot Five and Hot Seven period in the process. He later produced some of Armstrong's most important albums of the traditional jazz revival era, including *Louis Armstrong Plays W. C. Handy*.



His long tenure at Columbia Records culminated in him becoming responsible for the Popular Music and International divisions. Avakian signed and produced Dave Brubeck, Miles Davis, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Mathis, Rita Reys, and Erroll Garner to the label, among others. Later he fulfilled a role as producer at Warner Brothers (from 1959) and at RCA Victor. In 1960–61 he produced recordings by Bill Haley & His Comets for Warner Bros. Records. In 1962 he was responsible for organizing Benny Goodman's successful tour of the USSR. From about 1970 to 1974, he was the manager of Keith Jarrett; before this, he managed the Charles Lloyd Quartet of which Jarrett was a member. After this, he largely retired from the record business and bred racehorses.

Avakian is a founding officer of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. He is a Knight of Malta and won the last Order of Lenin for creative lifetime achievement in 1991. In 2000, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from *Down Beat* magazine. He received the National Order of the Legion of Honour of France in 2008, and in 2009 received a Grammy Award for lifetime achievement.

Composer, percussionist, and ethnomusicologist **Anthony Brown** has become a seminal figure in California contemporary creative music. Since 1998, his San Francisco-based Asian American Orchestra has received international acclaim for blending Asian musical instruments and sensibilities with the sonorities of the jazz orchestra. They have earned a GRAMMY nomination for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Performance (2000) and "Best CD of 2003" from *Downbeat* magazine. Brown has composed original scores for stage including ACT's *After The War* (2007), and his music can be heard as the theme for KQED's "Pacific Time," in film documentaries, and on over twenty recordings. He has collaborated with artists including Max Roach, Cecil Taylor, Zakir Hussain, George E. Lewis, James Newton and the SF Symphony, and has received numerous grants, awards, fellowships and commissions including a 2003 Guggenheim Fellowship. Brown holds an M. A. and Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from UC Berkeley, as well as a Master of Music from Rutgers University. A Smithsonian Associate Scholar, Artistic Director of Fifth Stream Music, and a Governor of the Recording Academy, Brown has served as a Visiting Professor at UC Berkeley and as Curator of American Musical Culture at the Smithsonian Institution.



**Sarah Cahill** was recently praised in the *Village Voice* for "her phenomenal technique, her instinctive command of recent aesthetics, and quite possibly the most interesting repertoire of any pianist around." She specializes in new American music as well as the American experimental tradition, and has commissioned, premiered, and recorded numerous compositions for solo piano. Composers who have dedicated music to her include John Adams, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski, Pauline Oliveros, Kyle Gann, Andrea Morricone, and Evan Ziporyn, and she has also premiered pieces by Lou Harrison, Julia Wolfe, Ingram Marshall, Toshi Ichianagi, Ursula Mamlok, George Lewis, Leo Ornstein, and many others.

Cahill is particularly fascinated by how the early 20th-century American modernists have influenced composers working today. She has explored these musical lineages in numerous concert programs, the most ambitious being a three-day festival celebrating the centennial of Henry Cowell in 1997. For the 2001 centennial of Ruth Crawford Seeger, she commissioned seven composers, all women, to write short homage pieces, which she has performed at Merkin Hall, Dartmouth College, the Cincinnati Conservatory, and at Hampshire College in Amherst. For another project, *Playdate*, she commissioned composers including Lois V Vierk and John Kennedy for a concert especially designed for children. Her newest project, *A Sweeter Music*, premiered in January 2009 at Hertz Hall in the Cal Performances series, with subsequent performances at New Sounds Live at Merkin Hall and other venues across the country. She enjoys working closely with composers, musicologists, and scholars to prepare scores for performance.

She has performed at the Miller Theatre and Cooper Union in New York, the Other Minds Festival, Pacific Crossings Festival in Tokyo, at the Spoleto Festival USA, and at the Nuovi Spazi Musicali festival in Rome.

For three “new music seances” produced by Other Minds, she performed most of three separate concert programs back to back, spanning music from the early 20th century to the present day. Cahill and pianist Joseph Kubera appear frequently as a duo; they premiered a set of four-hand pieces by Terry Riley at UCLA’s Royce Hall, and have performed them at the Triptych Festival in Scotland and at Roulette in New York.

Most of Cahill’s albums are on the New Albion label. She has also recorded for the Tzadik, CRI, New World, Albany, Cold Blue, and Artifact labels. She is currently preparing recordings of music by Leo Ornstein, Marc Blitzstein, and Mamoru Fujieda. Her radio show, “Then & Now,” can be heard every Sunday evening from 8 to 10 pm on KALW, 91.7 FM.



The Colorado Quartet

**The Colorado Quartet** (Julie Rosenfeld, violin; D. Lydia Redding, violin; Marka Gustavsson, viola; Katie Schlaikjer, cello) is recognized on four continents as one of the finest string quartets on the international scene. Winners of both the Banff International String Quartet Competition and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award, their performances are noted for their musical integrity, impassioned playing and lyrical finesse.

Highlights of the past years include tours of more than twenty countries and performances in major cities across the globe. New York appearances include the Mostly Mozart Festival, where they performed twenty Haydn Quartets over a two-year period, and concerts in Carnegie Hall and at Lincoln Center. The Quartet regularly performs the complete Beethoven Quartets, most recently in Berlin, making them the first female

quartet to have performed the Beethoven cycle in both North America and in Europe. The Colorado Quartet commemorated the 50th anniversary of Béla Bartók’s death in 1995 with the first complete performance of his String Quartets to take place in Philadelphia.

The Colorado Quartet has been Quartet-in-Residence at Bard College in New York State, where Quartet members teach private lessons, coach chamber ensembles and present courses on the Literature of the String Quartet. The ensemble was Quartet-in-Residence for 1998–99 at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and has also held artist residencies at The New School in Philadelphia, Swarthmore and Skidmore Colleges and Amherst College. They have given master classes across the continent, including at The Eastman School of Music, Northwestern University, The Banff Centre, Indiana University, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the University of Toronto, and are Artistic Directors of the Soundfest Chamber Music Festival and Quartet in Falmouth, Massachusetts. The Colorado Quartet’s inspiring style combines a deep scholarly knowledge of the quartet literature with energy, passion, and a focus on fine details. Members of the Colorado Quartet have served on the juries for several international competitions, including the Coleman Chamber Music Competition, Banff Quartet Competition and Concert Artists Guild Competition. Their critically acclaimed recordings of Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms and contemporary composers can be found on Parnassus, mode and Albany Records. The Colorado Quartet commemorated its 20th anniversary in 2003 with a release of the first in a complete set of Beethoven Quartet recordings; the complete recordings of Beethoven Quartets are available on the Parnassus label.

**John Duffy**, considered “one of the great heroes of American music,” has composed more than 300 works for symphony orchestra, opera, theater, television and film. He has received many awards for his contributions to music: two Emmys, an ASCAP award for special recognition in film and television music, a New York State Governor’s Art Award, and the (New York City) Mayor’s Award of Honor for Arts and Culture. He is also the recipient of the American Music Center’s Founders’ Award for Lifetime Achievement. As founder and president of Meet the Composer, an organization dedicated to the creation, performance, and recording of music by American composers, he initiated countless landmark programs to advance American music and to aid American composers. More recently he has established the John Duffy Composers Institute, a fellowship for young composers of staged works as part of the Virginia Arts Festival.

Duffy grew up in the Bronx, one of fourteen children of Irish immigrant parents. As a young man, he studied composition with noted composers Aaron Copland, Henry Cowell, Luigi Dallapiccola, Solomon Rosowsky and Herbert Zipper concurrently with his career and early successes in the theater. He credits Rosowsky for insisting uncompromisingly on learning the craft of music and developing the discipline and patience necessary to the art. Duffy’s appointment, in his twenties, to the post of music director, composer



and conductor of Shakespeare under the Stars, was the first in a succession of similar posts at the Guthrie Theater, the Long Wharf Theatre, and the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center, and for NBC and ABC television in New York City. The culmination was his landmark music for the production of *Macbeth* at John Houseman's American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut.

He composed some of his notable theater scores for Broadway and Off-Broadway productions of *The Ginger Man*, *Macbird*, *Mother Courage*, *Playboy of the Western World*, and many Shakespeare plays, including his memorable collaboration with John Houseman. Duffy also has composed distinguished concert music for a variety of commissions, among them: *A Time for Remembrance* (cantata for soprano, speaker and orchestra), commissioned by the U.S. Government to mark the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor; *Symphony No. 1: Utah*, commissioned by the

Sierra Club to draw attention to preserving and protecting public lands in southern Utah; *Freedom Overture*, commemorating the fall of the Berlin Wall; *Concerto for Stan Getz and Concert Band*; and the Emmy Award-winning score for the nine-hour PBS documentary, narrated by Abba Eban, "Heritage and the Jews."

Duffy lives in Camden, Maine, and is currently at work on a composition for string quartet with narration, based on writings of Mark Twain, commissioned by the Howard Hanson Institute of American Music at the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY, for the Ying Quartet.

**Josephine Gandolfi**, a native of Boston, has pursued her interests in innovative new music for solo piano, chamber ensemble, accompanied choir, and solo voice since moving to the San Francisco Bay Area and forming musical collaborations with other performers and organizations of like interest. She has enjoyed long-standing associations as keyboardist for the Cabrillo Music Festival Orchestra, under Maestra Marin Alsop, for Adesso Ensemble for New Music of San Francisco, under the direction of Rick Kvistad, with Picasso Ensemble of Santa Cruz, and with Parallele Ensemble under the direction of Nicole Paiement. With the latter ensemble she is featured soloist in a CD of concerti, chamber music, and piano solos by Germaine Tailleferre (Helicon 1048); a CD of music by Henry Cowell (mode 101) including piano solos and chamber music; and a CD of music by Lou Harrison featuring his opera *Rapunzel* and chamber music (New Albion 093). During the twelve years she served as accompanist to the Peninsula Women's Chorus she performed at national and international choral festivals and workshops featuring new music for women's chorus and participated in many commissioning projects that yielded new works by such composers as Libby Larsen, Ron Jeffers, and David Conte.

Gandolfi holds degrees in piano performance from Cornell University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Stanford University. On a Fulbright Grant she studied solo performance and vocal accompanying at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, Germany. She has served as a member of the piano faculties of Stanford and U.C. Santa Cruz and as a member of the vocal accompanying staff at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and in these positions has performed as recitalist with numerous singers and instrumentalists in new and traditional repertoire.

Mezzo Soprano **Wendy Hillhouse** has achieved a versatility and mastery of diverse repertoire that is rare. Her operatic career has encompassed performances with the Metropolitan Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival and most of the major American opera companies, as well as in Europe and Japan. Miss Hillhouse is an accomplished concert artist, having performed with the symphony orchestras of Boston, Seattle, Dallas, Pittsburgh, and Denver, and the Tanglewood, Cabrillo and Midsummer Mozart Festivals, as well as maintaining a busy schedule of Bay Area concert appearances. Recent opera performances have included the role of Aunt Julia in Lou Harrison's *Young Caesar* with Blueprint Festival, a return appearance with the Utah Opera in Carlyle Floyd's new opera *Cold Sassy Tree*, the Witch in Lou Harrison's *Rapunzel* with the Cabrillo Festival, and Mama McCourt in Utah Opera's *The*



*Ballad of Baby Doe*. Hillhouse can be seen on video recordings of *Le Nozze di Figaro* at Glyndebourne in the role of Marcellina, and as Grimgerde in the Metropolitan Opera's *Die Walküre*. Recent audio recordings include vocal pieces by Lou Harrison and Elinor Armer, Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols* with the Schola Cantorum and Henry Cowell's *Atlantis*, Dusan Bogdanovich's *Games*, and George Benjamin's *Upon Silence* with Parallèle Ensemble.

Hillhouse has included American song and 20th and 21st Century repertoire in her performances throughout her career. Last season included George Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children*, Cowell's *Atlantis*, Milhaud's *La Mort d'un Tryan* and *Cantate pour Inauguration du Musee de l'Homme*, and Henry Mollicone's *Flight Through the Stars*.

Early in her career Hillhouse won numerous competitions and awards, including the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the Pavarotti International Competition, the Loren L. Zachary Competition, and the Eleanor Steber Competition. In 1985 she was the first prize winner of the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artist Award, and consequently sang many recitals in the United States and Europe. She participated in San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, as well as the apprentice programs of the Santa Fe and San Diego Operas.

She is a member of the voice faculty and former co-chair of the Voice Department of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Currently serving as President of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of NATS, she is also a member of the Board of Directors of the San Francisco Song Festival. A resident of Redwood City, she holds degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the University of California at Berkeley.

At composer Lou Harrison's request, Wendy Hillhouse and Josephine Gandolfi performed songs by Henry Cowell, Charles Ives, John Cage, and Lou Harrison at the 1992 Cabrillo Music Festival celebration of Harrison's 75th birthday. Intrigued by the quality of these unknown works by Cowell, Hillhouse examined the Cowell manuscripts at the Library of Congress, and with Gandolfi's help readied a selection of songs, to date unpublished, for performance. Together they have presented numerous recitals in California focusing on the songs of Henry Cowell, along with works by Cowell's mentor Charles Ives and student Lou Harrison.



Sarah Holzman

**Sarah Holzman** is a regular performer with symphony orchestras, opera companies, choruses, and chamber ensembles around the San Francisco Bay Area. Holzman is also a founding member of the Laurel Ensemble. Her involvement with new music has brought her to the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Other Minds, Stanford's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics and a live radio concert on public radio's Echoes. In previous summers, she has performed with the Utah Festival Opera and with the festivals of Palma de Mallorca (Spain), Hot Springs, Orford, Domaine Forget, Sarasota and the Music Academy of the West. Holzman received her Bachelor of Music from the Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied with Michel Debost, and her graduate degree is from the San Francisco Conservatory, where she studied with

Tim Day. Other influential teachers have been Mary Ellen Jacobs, Greig Shearer, Leone Buyse, Raymond Guiot and Robert Langevin. When she's not playing her flute, Holzman enjoys exploring the trails of California and beyond.

**Joel Sachs** is the founder and director of the New Juilliard Ensemble—the chamber orchestra for new music at the renowned New York conservatory—and co-director of the internationally acclaimed new-music ensemble Continuum. Dr. Sachs has appeared in hundreds of performances in New York, nationally, and internationally, throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin America. He has also conducted orchestras and ensembles in Austria, China, El Salvador, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Mexico, Switzerland, and Ukraine, and held new-music residencies in Berlin, Helsinki, London, Salzburg, and Curitiba (Brazil). He has conducted the distinguished



Joel Sachs

Icelandic contemporary music ensemble Caput in a program of music from Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the United States, and Iceland, and a concert of music by Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen. They also recorded a CD of works by the Icelandic composer Askill Masson. With Continuum he has performed world-wide including four tours to Uzbekistan, six to Mongolia and concerts in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. In December 2006 he conducted Continuum in Jakarta, Indonesia, where they presented Tony Prabowo's opera *The King's Witch* in full staging, his piano concerto *Psalm*—both of which were composed for and premiered by the New Juilliard Ensemble—and music by American composers. In May, 2007 he conducted a concert of American music at the Shanghai Conservatory including the Chinese premiere of Ives' *Symphony No. 3*. In October, 2007 he conducted the Danube-Hudson Project, comprising works by Juilliard and Liszt Academy composition students, at the Liszt Academy in Budapest as part of the Budapest Autumn Festival. He appeared with Continuum in Odessa in April 2008, and in Mongolia for the sixth time in June, 2008. In March 2009 he was in residence at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki. In June 2009 he brought the New Juilliard Ensemble for four concerts in Tokyo. Joel Sachs' recordings with Continuum appear on the Advance, CRI, Naxos—including two Cowell CDs—New Albion, Nonesuch, and TNC labels. A CD of music of the Americas with La Camerata de las Americas (Mexico City) was released by Dorian. He also directs concerts by Juilliard students at MoMA Summergarden.

A member of Juilliard's music history faculty, Joel Sachs is writing a biography of the American composer Henry Cowell, to be published by Oxford University Press, and appears on radio as a commentator on recent music. He has been a regular delegate to Netherlands Music Days and other international music conferences. He is a graduate of Harvard College and received the M.A. and Ph.D. in musicology from Columbia University. He has published extensively on 19th and 20th century topics, including a book about Johann Nepomuk Hummel. Before joining the faculty of Juilliard he taught at Columbia University, the Johns Hopkins University, and the City University of New York.



**Madison Smith**, soprano, is quickly earning a reputation for herself after 1st place wins in both Pacific Musical Society's Senior Division Competition and the San Francisco NATS Competition, where she also received the Kathryn Harvey Award. Her recent performances include soloist in *Carmina Burana* with the San Francisco Conservatory Concert Chorale, Minerva in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the San Francisco Sinfonietta, and Lucy in *The Telephone*. This summer she made her European debut singing *Hänsel und Gretel* as well as being a featured performer in various opera concerts in Arosa, Switzerland. Smith earned her BM in Voice Performance from The Boston Conservatory and her MM in Voice Performance at San Francisco Conservatory of Music as a student of Wendy Hillhouse.

**Sandra Soderlund** is primarily an organist although she also performs on harpsichord and both modern and early piano. Dr. Soderlund holds degrees from Stanford University, the University of Southern California, and Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas. She is the editor of scholarly editions of keyboard works, including the *Two-Part Inventions* and *Four Duets* of J. S. Bach and the *Livre d'Orgue* of L.-N. Clérambault, as well as the author of articles on performance practices. Her book *Organ Technique: An Historical Approach* has been a standard text. The expansion of that book, entitled *How Did They Play? How Did They Teach? A History of Keyboard Technique* was recently released by Hinshaw Music. Soderlund is on the editorial board of the *Early Keyboard Journal* and teaches harpsichord and organ at Mills College in Oakland, California. She has performed throughout the U.S., in Holland, Germany, France, and Korea, and has recorded for Arkay and Albany Records.



# THANK YOU

Other Minds would like to thank the following individuals and institutions whose generous support between July 1, 2009 and October 15, 2009, has helped make our programs possible:

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## Special Thanks

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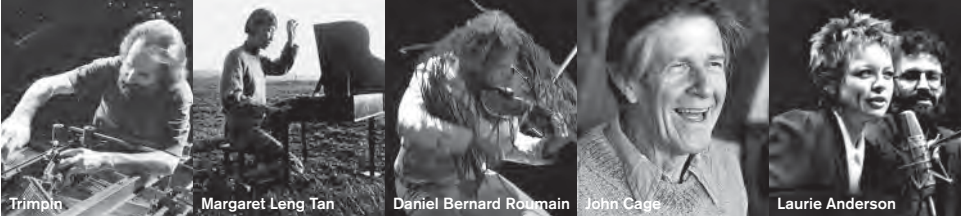
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Pictured: Carla Kihlstedt





**O**THER MINDS is dedicated to the encouragement and propagation of contemporary music in all its forms through concerts, workshops and conferences that bring together artists and audiences of diverse traditions, generations and cultural backgrounds. By fostering cross-cultural exchange and creative dialogue, and by encouraging exploration of areas in new music seldom touched upon by mainstream music institutions, Other Minds is committed to expanding and reshaping the definition of what constitutes "serious music."

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# HENRY COWELL AND EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

by Adam Fong

**H**arold Bloom, the writer and literary critic, would have us believe that great poets necessarily struggle to overcome the influences of their predecessors: that 19th-Century Romantic poets worked under the constant shadow of John Milton, and, perhaps (by interpolation), that mid-20th Century composers had always to deal with the music of Arnold Schoenberg...or that contemporary composers might critique themselves with Pierre Boulez or György Ligeti in mind.

Fortunately, for those of us who prefer not to constantly bear the weight of music history upon our shoulders, a spirit of exploration and experiment has come to define a musical tradition in America. For that, I believe we are most indebted to Henry Cowell.

Lineage and succession in music is often painted in broad strokes, describing aesthetic movements. Or else it is traced by the influence of one composer teaching another, as if learning to compose music were an apprenticeship akin to the repair of motor engines or the fabrication of chairs. But increasingly, to today's composers and in particular those that are of interest to (and are themselves) "other minds," to compose music involves a balance of "learned" execution with inventive design. For the latter quality, every composer seems to accumulate influences in a different manner, and never so simply as program notes or artist statements might describe.

Henry Cowell may have been fascinated by Irish myths, but of the millions of people and thousands of musicians who were familiar with those tales up until 1911, none had taken the opportunity to tell the story of Manaunaun in quite the way Cowell chose to do so. What brings about these moments of invention? How does something so elemental as a tone cluster take such a clear artistic form? While we can't know precisely, what we can learn from that invention and countless others that have taken place in music is that thanks to Henry Cowell's lifetime of achievements, the tradition of experiment in American music is alive and thriving, so that the accumulation of influences, of living everyday life, of living extraordinary individual lives, musical and otherwise, might find its way into the kind of immediate, contemporary, thrilling music that so moved Cowell himself.

There may be no greater tribute to Cowell's influence than the fact that the list of composers who have been deeply affected by him continues to grow. It is one thing to be influenced by personal contact, in the way that John Cage and Lou Harrison knew Cowell, as students. Likewise, Cowell played a significant role connecting artists to one another: it was at his urging that Charles Seeger accepted Ruth Crawford as a student, that Seeger first met Carl Ruggles, that Paul Bowles met Aaron Copland in 1930, that Vladimir Ussachevsky met Otto Luening in 1951 (to conduct early experiments with Ampex tape, many in Cowell's own home), and that, famously, Cage knocked on the door of Lou Harrison as he was considering a job at Cornish College of the Arts. These connections (and many others) were in a day's work for Cowell in the midst of an active life in new music.

At the next remove might be those composers whose work gained a wider audience thanks to Cowell's efforts in publishing and concert promotion: Charles Ives, Carlos Chavez, Dane Rudhyar, Wallingford Riegger, Henry Brant, Colin McPhee, Harry Partch, William Grant Still, and of course Ruth Crawford. Yet there are now four more generations of musicians who have come to know Cowell mostly, if not solely, through his works and publications. Among them are new music icons like Conlon Nancarrow, James Tenney, and Ben Johnston, more recently established composers such as Meredith Monk, Peter Garland and John Luther Adams, and countless aspiring artists, this writer included.

It is easy and convenient to begin from a contemporary musical concept, and trace a line back to Henry Cowell. While many composers, over the course of their career, may wander through the use of electronics, draw inspiration from the music of other cultures, or explore unconventional instrumental techniques, very few can be found at the vanguard of so many unusual practices. This is where Cowell seems always to be: the first of many. In 1930, he commissioned Leon Theremin to build the Rhythmicon, which would perform very difficult rhythms according to pitch relationships among the overtone series. Around that time he began teaching a course on "Music of the World's Peoples" at the New School for Social Research, planting the seed for what would decades later become ethnomusicology. And his unconventional piano techniques, so well publicized then and now, might have become anathema to new music fans were they not used in such expressive ways in Cowell's works.

The force of those pianistic inventions have bred a shallow reputation for Cowell in historical surveys, as a bombastic inventor who later regressed to neo-Romanticism. In the same way that Cage's mainstream reputation has ballooned from David Tudor's 1952 performance of 4'33", Cowell's three iconic piano works, *The Banshee*, *Aeolian Harp*, and *The Tides of Manaunau*, have been both a boon and a hindrance to his musical legacy. Those works rightfully symbolize Cowell's importance in a scene of "ultra-modern" composers. But to be challenging, rebellious, or difficult does not in retrospect appear to have been his mindset exactly. As the title of his book, *New Musical Resources*, and his copious writings make clear, Cowell considered those inventions as mere tools for musical expression. Later in his career, those specific tools became less prominent, and he focused more on counterpoint, polyharmony, and modal writing. His reputation seems to have suffered, possibly due, in a reflexive way, to his lack of conformity: he failed to parallel his earlier self.

Cowell's willingness to reinvent himself is alone enough to garner this writer's admiration, and is a value that has become ingrained in the tradition of American experimental music.

But perhaps equally admirable is that he managed to create a feeling of community, not among like-minded individuals, but among highly individual minds. Cage explained how, after Cowell's advice to study with Adolph Weiss (as a way to eventually study with Arnold Schoenberg) he "was now anxious to study composition, for working by myself and developing my own ideas had left me with a sense of separation from the mainstream of music, and thus of loneliness."

Cowell repaired that loneliness by articulating over and over again, in his concert programs, New Music Society publications, and journal articles, the importance of musical pioneers. Over time, his message has proven constitutional for a tradition whose influences only induce anxiety by their demanding of individual thought. Cowell has been called the "apostle," the "open sesame," and the "enlivener" of new music, and it does not seem a stretch to conclude that he is also the forefather of American Experimental Music. □

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The record quarterly is affiliated with NEW MUSIC, the quarterly which for the last six years has published compositions by American composers. Much of the music to be recorded is available in NEW MUSIC in the form of printed notes.

There has been an increasing demand for opportunities of hearing the works by contemporary American composers. A number of general societies perform a certain percentage of American works; and in the larger centers, there are special organizations for the performance of new music which include American works on their programs.

While programs of American works are granted in the music centers, these programs are available only to a small percent of those interested in hearing them. Also, owing to the expense of presenting such programs, a work is often heard but once and then laid aside to give opportunity for the presentation of another work. And even a person living in such a music center is only too apt to miss this one performance, and to lose his only chance of hearing the work in question.

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