



Bard Music West

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bard Music West Presents Its Second Festival, “The World of Henry Cowell”

Three concerts and a talk on April 6 and 7, 2018 at San Francisco’s Noe Valley Ministry offer an immersion into the work, influences, and legacy of Bay Area composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965).

Bard Music West is a project of the Bard Music Festival, the critically-acclaimed Hudson Valley summer festival of Bard College that has examined the life, influences, and music of a single composer each year since 1990.

February 19, 2018 (San Francisco) — On April 6 and 7, 2018, Bard Music West presents its second festival, **The World of Henry Cowell**, a deep dive into the life, influences, and legacy of the visionary Bay Area composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965) who transformed the musical landscape of his time.

The festival explores Cowell as impresario, cross-cultural ambassador, and inventor. Listeners will encounter rarely performed works by Cowell—including *Return* for percussion ensemble, *Homage to Iran* for violin, piano, and tombak, and the revolutionary piano miniatures *High Color*, *The Harp of Life*, and *Fabric*—alongside Persian classical music, eighteenth-century American choral works, and masterpieces by Cowell’s contemporaries and students. The festival will include the **West Coast premiere** of **Ruth Crawford Seeger**’s complete *Three Chants for Women’s Chorus* and a world premiere co-commission from composer **Eugene Birman** and choreographer/San Francisco Ballet soloist **James Sofranko** inspired by Henry Cowell and Martha Graham’s collaboration. With three concerts, a composer/choreographer interview, and a talk by Joel Sachs, author of the widely-acclaimed biography *Henry Cowell: A Man Made of Music*, the festival traces Cowell’s vast influence up to the present day.

This year's festival ensembles include the **Telegraph String Quartet**, hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle as "an incredibly valuable addition to the cultural landscape," **Volti**, San Francisco's premiere new music chorus, and the "forward-looking, expert ensemble" (The New Yorker), **Third Sound**, whose members include composer Patrick Castillo, flutist Sooyun Kim, clarinetist Romie de Guise-Langlois, violinist Karen Kim, cellist Michael Nicolas, and pianist Orion Weiss. Other featured artists include pianists and Cowell specialists **Sarah Cahill** and **Joel Sachs**, and **SFDanceworks**, directed by James Sofranko.

Bard Music West is a project of the Bard Music Festival, the summer classical music destination at Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley, which has examined the life, influences, and music of a single composer each year since 1990. Bard Music West explores the music and influences of 20th-century and contemporary composers—a modern twist on the Bard Music Festival concept for the Bay Area. Bard Music West's 2017 inaugural festival, called "a rich inaugural season" by *the San Francisco Classical Voice*, focused on the life and work of Hungarian composer György Ligeti.

San Francisco-based musicians Allegra Chapman, pianist, and Laura Gaynon, cellist, are artistic codirectors and founders of Bard Music West. "We are thrilled to present the second year of Bard Music West dedicated to the singular composer and innovator, Henry Cowell," said Chapman and Gaynon. "Cowell was a pivotal figure in American music and a prolific composer of incredibly joyful and powerful works, yet his music is rarely heard. It has been a thrill to put these programs together - like diving into a treasure trove of Bay Area and American musical history. We can't wait to share our discoveries with our audience!"

Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

"I want to live in the whole world of music."

"Music is my weapon. I believe in music, in its spirituality, its exaltation, its ecstatic nobility, its humor, its power to penetrate to the basic fineness of every human being."

—Henry Cowell

One of the Bay Area's greatest innovators and a revolutionary figure in the 20th-century music world, Henry Cowell was born in Menlo Park in 1897 to bohemian anarchist parents. Cowell's childhood was unusual by any standards. An autodidact musical prodigy, he received almost no formal education until the age of seventeen. Because of his impoverished upbringing, he lacked a piano for regular practice and composed in his head with an untamed imagination. He incorporated his early musical influences—Chinese opera, Japanese instruments, and Irish folk tunes—directly into his music, searching for new ways to create the sounds he heard so vividly in his mind. As a teenager, he met Charles Seeger, musicologist, composer, and father to the American folk singers Pete, Peggy, and Mike Seeger, at UC Berkeley who took him under his wing and taught him formal music theory.

After two years at Berkeley, Cowell left for New York to continue his studies. He soon found himself leading a bi-coastal life and embraced traveling, touring Europe several times with his music. In the 1920s, Cowell wrote *New Musical Resources* which became an essential text for 21st-century composers. Composers from Béla Bartók to Conlon Nancarrow cited Cowell's explosive cluster chords, "string piano," and rhythm-harmony experimentations as inspiration.

Cowell also created and taught the first course on world music, “Music of the World’s Peoples,” at The New School for Social Research in New York. He famously stated, “I want to live in the whole world of music.”

Cowell’s genius was of the generous, expansive variety. Not content to promote only his own music, he also supported the work of others who he believed had something interesting to say. He published the works of many contemporaries through the *New Music Quarterly* and performed their works at his New Music Society concert series. Carlos Chavez, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, Carl Ruggles, Edgar Varèse, and many others benefited from his attention.

Cowell spent four years in San Quentin Prison after pleading guilty to an act of oral sex. Though he was only charged with one sexual act, and naively failed to hire a lawyer or properly defend his own case, the San Francisco Examiner smeared him as a child molester and he lost many of his close friends and colleagues. He wrote music prolifically in prison and created a highly popular music class for inmates. After his early release, he relocated full time to New York and became President Kennedy’s unofficial ambassador for American music, traveling the world to attend conferences and present concerts. He composed nearly continuously until his death in 1965.

Although he wrote over 1000 works, Cowell’s music is rarely played today. Perhaps his interest in promoting the work of others and his time in San Quentin have contributed to his obscurity. Bard Music West’s festival offers a rare chance to discover Cowell’s work and explore his life in “the whole world of music.”

Ticket Information

Full Festival (3 concerts, 2 events): \$90 general | \$125 premium seating
Marathon Saturday (2 performances, 1 event): \$60 general | \$85 premium seating
Individual Concerts: \$35 general | \$50 premium seating | \$20 student
Events: \$10 (or free with purchase of tickets to any program)

Buy tickets at bardmusicwest.org/tickets or by phone at 415-857-1632.

All events at Noe Valley Ministry
1021 Sanchez St
San Francisco, CA 94114

Program One: In Search of American Music

Friday, April 6, 2018 at 7:30pm

Follow Henry Cowell in his search for the American voice, from the eighteenth-century American choral works of William Billings to the great American luminaries he promoted, including Charles Ives and Ruth Crawford Seeger. Cowell specialist pianist Sarah Cahill performs works by Beyer, Cage, Cowell, and Rudhyar, and the a cappella group Volti returns after their “transcendent” performance at Bard West’s inaugural festival.

Cowell: From Set of Two Movements: *High Color*
Sarah Cahill, piano

William Billings: *Modern Music*

Cowell: *Psalm 121*

Billings: *David's Lamentation*

Cowell: *The Morning Cometh*

William Walker: *Sweet Prospect*

Volti

Robert Geary, conductor and artistic director

Charles Ives: Piano Trio

Luosha Fang, violin

Laura Gaynon, cello

Allegra Chapman, piano

John Cage: *Bacchanal*

Johanna Beyer: From *Gebrauchs-Musik—I*

Dane Rudhyar: *Stars*

Sarah Cahill, piano

Ruth Crawford Seeger: Three Chants for Female Chorus

Volti

Robert Geary, conductor and artistic director

Leo Ornstein: *Suicide in an Airplane*

Allegra Chapman, piano

Cowell: Hymn and Fuguing Tune No. 7 for viola and piano

Jessica Chang, viola

Allegra Chapman, piano

William Grant Still: *Grief*

Otto Luening: Nine Songs to Poems of Emily Dickinson (selections)

Carl Ruggles: *Prayer*

Aaron Copland: 12 Poems of Emily Dickinson (selections)

Sara LeMesh, soprano

Allegra Chapman, piano

Event One: Conversation with Joel Sachs

Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 3pm

Joel Sachs—pianist, Juilliard professor, and author of the widely-acclaimed biography *Henry Cowell: A Man Made of Music*—will share stories from Cowell's adventurous life.

Program Two: Living in the Whole World of Music

Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 4pm

Discover the inspiration that Cowell drew from non-Western music, how his work opened the door for his students Lou Harrison and John Cage, and how that widening of possibilities is reflected today in contemporary musical masterworks that weave across cultures. Tombak virtuoso Shahab Paranj performs, and New York-based superstar ensemble Third Sound closes the program.

Wang Lu: *Urban Inventory*

Third Sound

Sooyun Kim, flute

Romie de Guise-Langlois, clarinet
Karen Kim, violin
Michael Nicolas, cello,
Orion Weiss, piano
Patrick Castillo, electronics

Cowell: Adagio (from *Ensemble for String Quintet and Thunder Sticks*)

Michael Nicolas, cello
Patrick Castillo, thunderstick

Carlos Chávez: Sonatina

Luosha Fang, violin
Allegra Chapman, piano

John Cage/Lou Harrison: *Double Music*

Mika Nakamura*
Tim Padgett*
Ben Paysen
Sam Rich*

Cowell: *Return*

Mika Nakamura*
Tim Padgett*
Ben Paysen
Sam Rich*

Classical Persian music

Shahab Paranj, tombak and friends

Cowell: *Homage to Iran*

Luosha Fang, violin
Allegra Chapman, piano
Shahab Paranj, tombak

* denotes students from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Event Two: Pre-concert Interview

Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 7:30pm

Eugene Birman, 2018 composer in residence, and James Sofranko, choreographer and artistic director of SFDanceworks.

Program Three: Henry Cowell: Inventor

Saturday, April 7, 2018 at 8pm

Revel in the sonorities of Henry Cowell's wild musical inventions and discover this year's commissioning project: an experimental collaboration between composer Eugene Birman and choreographer and San Francisco Ballet soloist, James Sofranko. Inspired by Martha Graham's legendary collaboration with Cowell and written for SFDanceworks and Third Sound, this premiere is sure to be unforgettable. The award-winning Telegraph Quartet ends the program with Cowell's moving *United Quartet*.

Eugene Birman: *The Sound of Your Solitude and Mine* - World Premiere
Third Sound

Sooyun Kim, flute
Romie de Guise-Langlois, clarinet
Karen Kim, violin
Michael Nicolas, cello

SFDanceworks

James Sofranko, choreographer and artistic director of SFDanceworks

Carl Ruggles (reconstructed by John Kirkpatrick): *Mood, Prelude to an Imaginary Tragedy*

Karen Kim, violin

Orion Weiss, piano

Cowell: *26 Simultaneous Mosaics*

Third Sound

Romie de Guise-Langlois, clarinet

Karen Kim, violin

Michael Nicolas, cello

Orion Weiss, piano

William Winant, percussion

Cowell: *Fabric*

Orion Weiss, piano

Cowell: *The Banshee*

Tiger

The Harp of Life

Joel Sachs, piano

George Crumb: *Apparition* (selections)

Sara LeMesh, soprano

Allegra Chapman, piano

Cowell: *United Quartet*

Telegraph String Quartet



About Allegra Chapman
Artistic Codirector and Executive Director
Bard Music West

Described as "brilliant" by the San Francisco Classical Voice, San Francisco-based pianist **Allegra Chapman** is dedicated to engaging with new audiences as performer and presenter. She has performed at prestigious venues throughout the United States, Europe, and

China, including Alice Tully Hall, the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, the Bard Music Festival, the Liszt Ferenc Memorial Museum in Budapest, and Xi'an Concert Hall in Xi'an, China. Her performances have been broadcast on WQXR New York, WFMT Chicago, and KALW San Francisco.

An avid chamber musician and passionate advocate for contemporary music, Allegra performs regularly with San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and UC Berkeley's Eco Ensemble, and has worked with many composers including Joan Tower and Charles Wuorinen. She has collaborated with members of International Contemporary Ensemble and the Telegraph and Orion String Quartets. Allegra is on faculty at California Music Preparatory Academy and the Xi'an International Music Festival.

Allegra studied with Jeremy Denk and Peter Serkin at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, graduating in the inaugural class with degrees in piano performance and history. She earned her masters at The Juilliard School where she studied with Seymour Lipkin and Julian Martin.



About Laura Gaynon
Artistic Codirector and Associate Director
Bard Music West

As a frequent performer, educator, and presenter of cello and chamber music, cellist Laura Gaynon has performed in concert halls across the United States, Europe, Canada, and China. Currently based in the Bay Area, Laura performs with the American Bach Soloists, the Pacific Crest Chamber Players, the Magik*Magik Orchestra, and the baroque chamber ensemble Musa. As a

chamber musician, she has collaborated with luminaries including Kim Kashkashian,

Geoff Nuttall, Bonnie Hampton, Paul Hersh, and Ian Swensen. Laura is cofounder and coartistic director of Bard Music West in San Francisco. She is dedicated to promoting the music of today, and spearheaded Musa's "Art Inspiring Art" commissioning project, now in its third year.

As an educator, Laura has a private cello studio in San Francisco and directs the String Quartet Program at Thomas Hart Middle School in Pleasanton, CA. She is faculty at Chamber Music by the Bay, California Music Preparatory Academy and the Pacific Crest Music Festival. Laura holds degrees from Yale University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she graduated with a master of music in cello performance, an artist certificate in chamber music, and an emphasis in historical performance practice as a student of Jennifer Culp and Elisabeth Reed.

About Bard Music West

Bard Music West is a new festival that explores the mind and work of a 20th-century or contemporary composer each year, delving into the ideas, obsessions, movements, and people that captured his or her imagination. Events range backwards and forwards in time, across musical genres and creative media.

The festival's second season focuses on the revolutionary life and music of Henry Cowell (1897-1965) who transformed the musical landscape of his time. Bard Music West's inaugural season in March 2017 focused on the life and influences of György Ligeti (1923-2006), the brilliant Hungarian composer whose works became most widely known through the films of Stanley Kubrick.

Bard Music West is a new generation of the Bard Music Festival (BMF), a critically-acclaimed classical music festival founded by Bard College in 1990. Bard Music West combines the depth and creativity of the BMF with a modern twist for the San Francisco Bay Area.

About the Bard Music Festival

Leon Botstein and Christopher H. Gibbs, *Artistic Directors*

Irene Zedlacher, *Executive Director*

Raissa St. Pierre, *Associate Director*

Founded in 1990, the Bard Music Festival has established its unique identity in the classical concert field by presenting programs that, through performance and discussion, place selected works in the cultural and social context of the composer's world. Programs of the Bard Music Festival offer a point of view. The intimate communication of recital and chamber music and the excitement of full orchestral and choral works are complemented by informative preconcert talks, panel discussions by renowned musicians and scholars, and special events. In addition, each season Princeton University Press publishes a book of essays, translations, and correspondence relating to the festival's central figure.

By providing an illuminating context, the festival encourages listeners and musicians alike to rediscover the powerful, expressive nature of familiar compositions and to become acquainted

with less well-known works. Since its inaugural season, the Bard Music Festival has entered the worlds of Brahms, Mendelssohn, Richard Strauss, Dvořák, Schumann, Bartók, Ives, Haydn, Tchaikovsky, Schoenberg, Beethoven, Debussy, Mahler, Janáček, Shostakovich, Copland, Liszt, Elgar, Prokofiev, Wagner, Berg, Sibelius, Saint-Saëns, Stravinsky, Schubert, Carlos Chávez, and Puccini. The 2018 festival will be devoted to the life and work of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, and 2019 will see the exploration of the life and legacy of Erich Wolfgang Korngold.

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For more information, contact Allegra Chapman, Artistic Codirector and Executive Director,
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