



Johanna Beyer (American Composers)

Amy C. Beal

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Composer Johanna Beyer's fascinating body of music and enigmatic life story constitute an important chapter in American music history. As a hard-working German émigré piano teacher and accompanist living in and around New York City during the New Deal era, she composed plentiful music for piano, percussion ensemble, chamber groups, choir, band, and orchestra. A one-time student of Ruth Crawford, Charles Seeger, and Henry Cowell, Beyer was an ultramodernist, and an active member of a community that included now-better-known composers and musicians. Only one of her works was published and only one recorded during her lifetime. But contemporary musicians who play Beyer's compositions are intrigued by her originality.

Amy C. Beal chronicles Beyer's life from her early participation in New York's contemporary music scene through her performances at the Federal Music Project's Composers' Forum-Laboratory concerts to her unfortunate early death in 1944. This book is a portrait of a passionate and creative woman underestimated by her music community even as she tirelessly applied her gifts with compositional rigor.

The first book-length study of the composer's life and music, Johanna Beyer reclaims a uniquely innovative artist and body of work for a new generation.

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