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## Inventory of the Henry Cowell Correspondence, 1937-1944

### Collection number: ARCHIVES COWELL 1

The Music Library

University of California, Berkeley  
Berkeley, California

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#### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Henry Cowell Correspondence,

**Date (inclusive):** 1937-1944

**Collection number:** ARCHIVES COWELL 1

**Creator:** Cowell, Henry, 1897-1965

**Extent:** Number of items: 13 letters

**Repository:** The Music Library

Berkeley, California 94720-6000

**Shelf location:** For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

**Language:** English

Donor:

Elizabeth Elkus, Berkeley.

Date:

November 13, 1986.

#### Access

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#### Publication Rights

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#### Preferred Citation

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## Scope and Content

Principally with Albert Elkus, Professor, University of California, Berkeley, these letters chiefly concern Cowell's imprisonment at San Quentin Prison, 1936-1940. Other correspondents include Mrs. Olive Thompson Cowell, and Mrs. Sidney Robertson Cowell.

item 1. **Dated: 171 San Marcos Avenue, San Francisco, California, February 11th, 1937. One leaf.**

### Scope and Content Note

Letter from Mrs. Olive Cowell to Professor Albert Elkus, Department of Music, University of California, Berkeley. Refers to "the matter of fixing the sentence of Henry Cowell by the California Board of Prison Terms and Paroles." Requests a letter "expressing confidence in Henry Cowell, referring to his artistic accomplishments."

item 2. **Dated: February 20, 1937, [Berkeley]. Three items: a draft of a letter, a carbond-copy of the letter, and a card containing the name of the addressee. Three leaves.**

### Scope and Content Note

Letter from Albert Elkus to the State Board of Prison Terms and paroles attesting "to the fine character and the steadfastness of purpose which has characterized his [i.e., Henry Cowell] career in music."

item 3. **Dated: Box 59182, San Quentin, Calif., Jan. 15th, 1939. Two leaves, typescript.**

### Scope and Content Note

Letter from Henry Cowell to Albert Elkus thanking him for programming one of his works on a forthcoming radio broadcast on February 7, [1939]. Suggests that excerpts from his "United Quartet" or his "Seven Paragraphs" might be performed. References to John Edmunds (St. Edmunds), Ray Green, Mary Pasmore, Miss J. M. Beyer, And Mrs. Olive Cowell. Postscript: "P. S. Do you know the music of Lou Harrison, now at Mills College, Physical Education Department? It's worth knowing."

item 4. **Dated: Box 59182, San Quentin, California, February 11th, 1939. Two leaves, Typescript.**

### Scope and Content Note

Letter from Henry Cowell to Albert Elkus thanking him for including a movement from his "United Quartet" on the recent League of Composers broadcast (see above no. 3). States he "had permission" to hear the broadcast." Music performed by Ray Green and a student quartet. Reports that "Mr. and Mrs. [Percy] Grainger visited him recently.

item 5. **Typescript copy of a letter dated January 29, 1940. Letter from Henry Cowell to [Mrs. Olive Cowell] which was sent to Albert Elkus. Two leaves.**

### Scope and Content Note

Contents: an in-depth surey of Henry Cowell's musical activities while he was confined to San Quentin Prison since [May 26, 1936]. A most important document.

item 6. **Dated: 171 San Marcos Avenue, San Francisco, California, March 26th, 1940. Two leaves, typescript.**

### Scope and Content Note

Letter from Mrs. Olive Cowell to Albert Elkus seeking assistance to have Henry Cowell released from prison. Enclosed is a list of activities of Henry Cowell while at San Quenetin (see item 5).

- item 7.           **Brief note lacking both a place and date (1940). Two leaves.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Letter from Mrs. Olive Cowell to Albert Elkus informing him that Henry Cowell has been paroled from prison and is in New York with Percy Grainger.
- item 8.           **Dated: 7, Cromwell Place, White Palms, New York, November 17, 1940. Written on the letterhead stationery of *New Music Recordings* New York. One leaf.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Thanks to Albert Elkus for his many kindnesses during "his sojourn in San Quentin." Discusses the difficulty of some of the music published in the *New Music Edition*.
- item 9.           **Dated: New York City, 61 Seventh Avenue South, April 24, 1942. 10 leaves.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Letter from Mrs. Sidney Robertson Cowell to Albert Elkus. Lengthy discussions of many subjects including Ernest Bloch, Suzanne Bloch, the Library of Congress and recording, the W. P. A. Folk Music files, Latin American composers, the Pan American Union Committee, composers in Los Angeles, etc.
- item 10.          **Dated: 1209 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, California, December 15, 1942. One page, carbon copy of a typescript letter.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Letter from Albert Elkus to The Honorable Culbert L. Olson, Governor of California, Sacramento, California, concerning an impending visit of Mrs. Cowell with the Governor concerning a pardon for Henry Cowell.
- item 11.          **Dated: 61 Seventh Avenue South, New York City, March 22, 1943. Four pages, typescript.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Letter from Mrs. Sidney Robertson Cowell to Albert Elkus concerning several subjects, including army bands during WW II, Richard Goldman, Charles Cushing, Henry Cowell's *Gaelic Symphony* for band with strings, Latin American Composers, a selling a piano to the U. C. B. Department of Music.
- item 12.          **Dated New York City, Jnuary 26, 1944.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Telegram from Henry Cowell to Albert Elkus concerning a meeting of the Music Educators National Conference in St. Louis. Would Elkus join a panel with Aaron Copeland and himself concerning the subject of the relationship between contemporary composers and music education.
- item 13.          **Dated 61 Seventh Avenue South, New York City, Thursday, November 5 (no year given). Five leaves, typescript.**
- Scope and Content Note**
- Letter from Mrs. Sidney Robertson Cowell to Albert Elkus describing the first meeting between the Cowells and the youthful Leon Kirchner --hilarious. Other references to Ernest Bloch's "dissertations."