

ACMP

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## ACMP Foundation News

### The Quartet Project - Composer Geoff Hudson's Graded Pieces for String Quartets

The Quartet Project is a group of graded pieces for string quartets – very much on the order of the Bartók *Mikrokosmos* – composed by **Geoff Hudson**. The most elementary of the pieces are quite short, contemporary in sound and technique (i.e. they include the use of glissando, pizzicato, and modern harmonies) and are meant for beginning ensembles. The ACMP Foundation provided supporting funds toward expenses involved in composing and printing the quartets.

Geoff Hudson was trained as a cellist, receiving his undergraduate degrees at Oberlin College, where he studied American history and composition (with Richard Hoffmann) and earned a Master's in composition at New England Conservatory, where his principal teacher was Malcolm Peyton. His many compositions for strings include quartets, a string quintet, a string sextet, a piano quartet, duets for viola and cello, and chamber music combining strings and winds.

Although Geoff devotes his focus to composing, he still enjoys playing chamber music and says, "I can never forget the excitement with which I explored the classical quartet repertoire. As a young cellist, I hungered for the great composers of the early 20th century but it was years before my musical growth allowed me to try Bartók or Shostakovich, and other masters – Carter, Ligeti, Shapely – remained permanently out of my reach. I thought how exciting would it be if that first discovery of chamber music could include music of today? And so the inspiration for the Quartet Project was born."

Geoff continues, "I aim to offer beginning chamber music players a chance to taste the harmonies, textures, and rhythms of today's music. I want to bring newer sounds into the tradition, offering an alternative to the 'classical' virtues of balance and restraint prized by Haydn and Mozart. The music of

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NEWSLETTER, Autumn 2009



The front page of the score of  
*Forest Waltz*  
by Geoffrey Hudson  
(The tempo is marked "Shady")  
Scores and parts may be  
downloaded from  
[www.hybridvigormusic.org](http://www.hybridvigormusic.org)

the Quartet Project will embrace the rhythmic grooves of popular music and include the folk-based music of Ireland, India, Latin America, and the Balkans, thus bringing the diversity of today's musical world into the reach of string players from the outset of their studies."

North American Advisory Council member, **Sally Bagg** (Vc, Hatfield, MA), Director of the [Junior Greenwood Camp](#), Coordinator of Instrumental Music at Smith College Campus School, and chamber music coach at the Northampton Community Music Center, says, "That is all true of Geoff Hudson's graded quartets, as we discovered at Greenwood over the past two summers with our young kids. They all, every one of them, liked working on these pieces. In the summer of 2009 we had 16 students who played some of the easiest and some of the quite advanced pieces in performance. Geoff is currently working with a number of music schools and their students to receive feedback for the music and its availability to players, as well as what they think about the experience of playing this kind of contemporary music. The music is not exclusively for young people, but for anyone at all who would like to have access to graded literature for string quartet; in other words, members of ACMP. Several adult amateur quartets already have been playing selections from the Quartet Project; and they find this music a refreshing complement to the standard quartet repertoire."

"Hybrid Vigor Music is the organization that sponsors The Quartet Project. It accepts donations from people who wish to sponsor a quartet, much as Prince Esterházy sponsored Haydn's compositions which were then dedicated to him. Recently an anonymous donor chose to honor our Northampton Community Music Center by commissioning a quartet from Geoff Hudson. Now the Center will have its very own quartet dedicated to it, to use with its string students."

Board Member **Jenny Stirling** (Va, Newton, MA), comments on the project from a teacher's point of view: "I really like that a lot can be quickly learned/accomplished and (importantly) felt good about in a very efficient, musically gratifying way because the works are mostly brief and have a focal musical, stylistic, and technical point."

And finally, a father in Iowa, whose daughter took part in a Quartet Project workshop at Drake University's Community School of Music in Des Moines last year says, "Hearing the music of different levels all together in the concert makes one appreciate even more the quality of the compositions, and get a glimpse of some of the scope of the composer. Everyone played really well, and the pieces had a coherence and tightness that was delightful. Geoffrey's passion is contagious, igniting a similar passion that our family had only dreamed of for our children."



Geoff Hudson working with students at a Quartet Project workshop run by the Greater Grand Forks Symphony Orchestra at the North Dakota Museum of Art in December 2008.

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