

String Quartet #1: Program Notes and Composer Biography
Curtis Peacock

String Quartet #1 for quartet plus jazz guitar began after I received a request for a short setting of the jazz standard “My Funny Valentine” for a Valentine’s Day concert. This resulting quasi hip-hop arrangement was quite popular after its premiere in 2006, though, and a longer version was then commissioned along with the second movement “Misty.” At this point, I started to envision a four-movement quartet, following the standard symphonic form with jazz standards as a loose basis for each movement. While composing I tried to imagine what the classical masters might have done in my position. So I strove to write neo-classical, third stream music that follows standard form, but at the same time bends and breaks form. This quartet is truly third stream music that is not entirely jazz or classical music. It draws heavily on classical style and compositional techniques, but also includes jazz improvisation as well as rock expression and hip hop rhythm at every turn. While the quartet parts do not specifically call for improvisation, they invite ornamentation and a freewheeling approach. “My Funny Valentine” follows a sonata-allegro form, followed by the slow movement “Misty.” The early jazz standard “Limehouse Blues” inspired the scherzo third movement and “Autumn Leaves” inspired a bossa nova finale. A passionate unifying theme connects the movements and runs through the entire work. This is something like Tchaikovsky’s “fate theme”, but there is no extra-musical meaning. Shortly after I completed String Quartet #1, I also composed a three-movement String Quartet #2 in a similar style. I was initially inspired to write in a third stream style after taking part in the premiere of *Encounters* for symphony orchestra plus jazz big band by Gunther Schuller in 2004. To me, Schuller’s third stream music seemed more relevant than most of the odd turn-of-the-century compositional styles. Where Schuller combined jazz with avant-garde modern classical style, I went a different direction. Instead, I tried to imagine how the older classical masters might have written jazz, rock and hip-hop into their compositions. String Quartets #1 and 2 are among the first of my third stream compositions in this style. Along with these string quartets, “Kaleidoscope” and “Teleidoscope” for chamber orchestra and Concerto for solo tuba and winds are the most notable. This music goes back to my student days at the University of Washington. The performance was in Brechemin Auditorium on Sunday, May 9, 2010. The performers are the 2010 University of Washington Graduate String Quartet.

Composer biography: Curtis Peacock (b. 1981) has enjoyed an extremely varied career as a music educator, conductor, multi-instrumentalist, composer, researcher, arranger, scratch/mix DJ and hip-hop producer. After winning the classical solo competition sponsored by the Ladies Musical Club of Seattle in 2011, Curtis used the prize money to purchase an engagement ring for his wonderful wife, Lyndi. His musical compositions often blend classical, jazz, rock and hip-hop elements into an accessible third stream style. Sheet music for his Concerto for tuba and jazz piano trio is available through the Tuba-Euphonium Press. Additionally, he has completed several projects where he researched, edited, arranged, performed and recorded music from the “Golden Age of Bands” in America (1880-1910). As part of these projects, Dr. Peacock created new scores with modern instrumentation and transpositions. His new edition of *Beelzebub* for solo tuba and band is available through Carl Fischer Music. As an educator, Dr. Peacock is a champion for the modernization of music education in the 21st century. He emphasizes the importance of creativity, multi-instrumentalism and improvisational skills as well as the inclusion of electronic instruments and amplification. Highlights of his career include live performances as a tuba soloist on NPR’s *From the Top* and Seattle’s KING-FM radio, two tours of Asia, and conducting some of the brightest young students in the world at BASIS charter schools’ annual performance of the National Anthem for Arizona Diamondbacks baseball at Chase Field. Dr. Peacock holds degrees in music performance from the University of Washington and Arizona State University. He has served on the

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faculty at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, BASIS Prescott, Central Washington University and Northern Arizona University.