



STANLEY GRILL    **DIDEROT STRING QUARTET**  
AT THE CENTER OF ALL THINGS

## *Stan Grill*

Raised in the Bronx, Stan Grill has been obsessed with music since the age of six, when his mother took him to Carnegie Hall and he was astonished and awestruck by a performance of “La Mer.” While that obsession first took the form of playing piano at every possible moment (when not otherwise engaged in activities typical of a kid growing up in the Bronx of the 1950’s and ’60s), it was Stan’s music theory studies at the Manhattan School of Music that converted that obsession to writing music – and to finding his own musical voice. He learned the craft from extraordinary musicians: among others – Robert Helps, Leon Kushner, Ursula Mamlok and Joseph Probstakoff. Stan’s passion for medieval and Renaissance music has greatly influenced his writing – a contemporary expression of ageless techniques based on melody, modal harmonies, and contrapuntal, extended, interweaving lines. Two main themes permeate many of his works – music composed in an attempt to translate something about the nature of the physical world, and music composed to inspire and promote world peace. Stan’s music has been performed the world over – from Ecuador to Poland; Toulouse to Tokyo; Vienna to Brooklyn – by such luminaries as Camerata Philadelphia, Camerata Arkos, Englewinds, the Pandolfis Consort, the Bronx Arts Ensemble, One World Symphony, violists Brett Deubner and Ralph Farris, and violinist Jorge Avila.

“As I see it, as much as we strive to find reason and purpose in our having been born into this amazing, mysterious and awe-inspiring universe, that attempt is largely futile. It is however, the best part of our nature that obliges us to make the attempt, though the most we can hope for is to gain some small degree of understanding of the world around us, and, more importantly, of ourselves. To achieve this, we each approach the problem in our own way, uniquely shaped by our cultural background, innate talents and abilities, education and so on. For some, science may be the window through which they best perceive and interpret the world, for others, religion. For those to whom the world seems to express itself most clearly and beautifully through sound, music is the voice that speaks to us and through which we, in turn, most effectively express ourselves. The best of my music has arrived, rather inexplicably, as part of a personal effort to understand the world and myself. It is, in a way, an act of translation. The world says something, I try to understand it, and then translate it into musical language. The particular musical language which I speak, is, of course, a product of my conservatory training and personal musical tastes, but hopefully, the outcome, imperfect a translation as it may be, will convey to others something of its original intent.” – Stan Grill

## *The Music*

### **American Landscapes**

As often happens when I write music, an image is evoked by some initial musical ideas. These create a mental landscape which I then follow, wherever it happens to lead. I start at the first notes and these lead to the next, like traveling down a winding road whose ultimate direction and destination is out of sight and unknown. In an abstract way, I was trying to capture something of the America that exists in my imagination – one which happens to be a far better place than the reality. My mental America is populated by the same disparities that exist in the real one: the stark contrasts between hectic cities teeming with people of all kinds, small quiet towns with houses out of Hopper paintings, vast stretches of unpopulated forests and mountains, smoke stacks belching smoke for miles, trains that go on forever, endless fields of grain. It is an America that exists only in books: it lacks, because I dream of better, the violence, crassness and extremism that is as ingrained in American culture as is what is best about us.

### **Lonely Voices**

Throughout our violent history, unfortunately, voices for peace are all too often a lone voice in the wilderness. This music attempts to embody in sound that lonely voice. In each movement, one member of the quartet takes a turn as the lonely voice – the first violin, the viola, the cello and finally the second violin. This quartet is another addition to my series of musical works intended to encourage thoughts about the possibility and hope for lasting world peace.

### **At the Center of All Things**

This single movement work was inspired by one of Rilke's "Buddha" poems. "...and he is Star. And multitudes of giant stars that we don't see stand all around him." The music imagines being at the vast center of our galaxy of stars, centered and quiet in the midst of their vast spinning wheels of light. The wheel spins faster and faster, but the center holds, in deep, perfect, stillness. It is by writing music like this that I try to remind myself of what is real.

## *The Diderot Quartet*

Named after the prominent eighteenth-century French philosopher and Boccherini enthusiast Denis Diderot – the Diderot Quartet came together in 2012 in New York City. Having first met at Oberlin Conservatory and The Juilliard School, all four musicians shared a background in historical performance and a passion for the string quartet genre; and they quickly found the thrill of exploring the latter repertoire on period instruments to be irresistible. Featured in the Chamber Music America article “New Voices in Old Music,” Diderot String Quartet brings a fresh approach to both familiar and lesser-known works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

*“The Diderot Quartet is the perfect string quartet for my music, which I recognized the moment I heard the unique, intense sound that emerges from their gut-stringed instruments. While their repertoire is centered around music of the classical and early romantic periods, given the extent to which polyphony informs my writing, I knew they would be the ideal voice to project the sound I am after when I write.”*  
– Stan Grill

Produced by: Ralph Farris

Co-Produced and Engineered by: Randy Crafton

Recorded July, 2016: Kaleidoscope Sound, Union City, NJ

Edited, Mixed and Mastered by: Randy Crafton

Cover Design: Mark Kingsley

Stan Grill’s Publishing: SG Music Publications (ASCAP)

Stan Grill gratefully acknowledges those who helped make this recording possible: Ralph Farris, members of the Diderot Quartet, Randy Crafton, Anna Hamilton, Mark Kingsley, Philip Blackburn, Chris Campbell, Renee Alberts, Christine LeBeau, and everyone I know of loving and kind spirit who kindles my faith in music.

*On the web:*

[stangrillcomposer.com](http://stangrillcomposer.com)

[facebook.com/stanley.grill.9](https://facebook.com/stanley.grill.9)

[diderotquartet.com](http://diderotquartet.com)

[facebook.com/DiderotStringQuartet](https://facebook.com/DiderotStringQuartet)

[ralphfarris.com](http://ralphfarris.com)

[facebook.com/TheRalphFarris](https://facebook.com/TheRalphFarris)

[kaleidoscopesound.com/](http://kaleidoscopesound.com/)



## *The String Quartets of Stan Grill*

6 Contrapuntal Pieces	1986
For Laura	1987
To a Child (with soprano)	1987
The Beckoning Stars	2001
Short Stories	2003
American Landscapes	2007
Middle Ground	2012
Afterwards, there were no more wars	2013
At the Center of All Things	2013
Lonely Voices	2013
The Time is Past	2016
Dreaming of a Better World	2016

## **AMERICAN LANDSCAPES**

I	Allegro	7:45
II	Presto	3:56
III	Adagio, Allegro, Adagio	4:37
IV	Allegro	6:31

## **LONELY VOICES**

I	Adagio, Allegro, Adagio	7:15
II	Allegro	3:39
III	Adagio	6:48
IV	Presto	5:37

## **AT THE CENTER OF ALL THINGS**

Adagio, Andante, Andantino, 16:50  
Moderato, Allegro, Presto,  
Prestissimo, Adagio

Adriane Post, *violin*  
Johanna Novom, *violin*  
Kyle Miller, *viola*  
Paul Dwyer, *cello*



innova is the label of the  
American Composers Forum.  
© Stanley Grill, 2017. All Rights Reserved.  
[www.innova.mu](http://www.innova.mu)  
[stangrillcomposer.com](http://stangrillcomposer.com)

