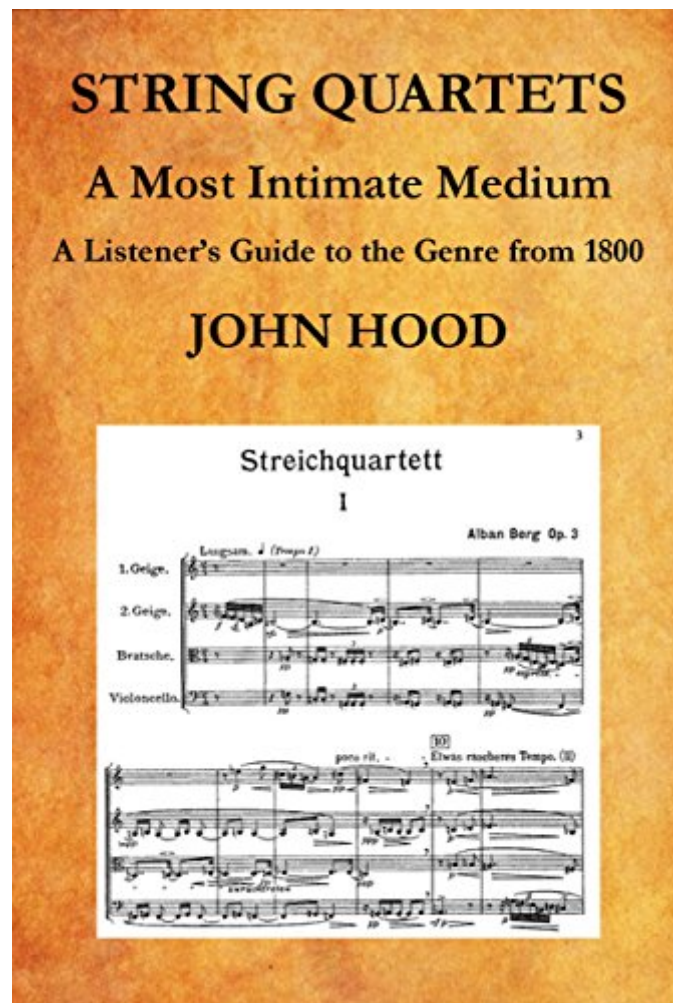




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String Quartets: A Most Intimate Medium



Synopsis

It has often been said that string quartets represent a composer's most intimate and personal works, a statement with which I wholeheartedly agree. After listening to string quartets for over 25 years, I have come to believe this humble assembly of two violins, viola and cello somehow manages to express the whole range of human emotional experiences. This book contains discussion of 250 string quartets by 150 composers, from 1800 through to the present day. It is not an academic treatise. The approach to the quartets is non-technical - they are described as they unfold, and the reviews are mostly concerned with the chronological structure and emotional feeling of the works. There are also references to similar sounding quartets, and influences from other composers, when appropriate. Some musical terms are used. These are defined in a linked Glossary, although your device's online dictionary function may also serve. I am sure that most readers, even novices, would quickly become familiar with the basic musical vocabulary used in the book. While most of the popular string quartet repertoire is covered here, there is also a host of lesser known composers discussed. For those only just embarking on this journey, they will find many wonderful string quartets available by these composers. Sadly, many of them are not frequently recorded, but all of the works covered are available at time of writing. There is much fine music to be found here. Each review comes with information on current availability - mostly on US and UK. Links to YouTube performances of the works are also supplied, when available. This would be the case in about 95% of the reviews. This feature may not work on all Kindle devices, but any device that uses the Kindle App allows the reader to go directly to the performance on YouTube. There is also information regarding the availability of the quartets on Spotify, which features a huge amount of string quartets on their site. Another source is the blog Earsense, which often has multiple string quartet performances of a quartet. Whilst it can be read from cover to cover, the book is more designed as a source of information reflecting the depth of the string quartet repertoire. My hope is that readers might find themselves listening to composers who are entirely new to them. While the writing style is personal, almost conversational, it is my ambition to create an invaluable resource that would enable readers to enter and explore the wonderful world of string quartets.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having discovered Mr Hood's writing on string quartets has led this listener on a fantastic journey of discovery of these wonderful "miniatures" from a world of composers that truly express all that we are, both musically and how we are as humans. The beauty of the writing is such that what we get are the string quartets themselves, having Mr Hood looking lovingly at each string quartet "reviewed" as a personal journey of the listener rather than some dry academic appraisal of "musical worth" is such a refreshing take on musical review that one can almost "hear" what Mr Hood talks about, the inner workings of each string quartet. The beauty for me is that it is the string quartet that is exposed rather than the "personality" of the reviewer, something extremely rare in all musical reviews I find, this is not the writing of some music academic but of a human with a deep connection to the medium. If one wants to discover the "great" examples of string quartet writing, they are all here, the late Beethoven quartets, the Bartok, and some of my favourites, the Haydn, and Dvorak but then to discover the "lost" gems from Karl-Erik Welin, Jordi Cervello, Daniel Jones, Joseph Jongen and Guillaume Lekeu is where Mr Hood comes into his own. Be prepared for a wonderful journey of discovery that this book will take you on, for some of the most wonderful music we, as humans, over the last 400 hundred years or so have created.

John Hood's writing and evocative descriptions of these deeply investigated string quartets are for me a source of meditation and an exercise in mindful concentration as he leads the reader through the nuances of each piece from his perspective. This is a most unique book from an author who clearly loves the genre. It stands alone in its wonderfully original (from my perspective) format. Highly recommended.

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