

# JOEL HARRISON STRING CHOIR (usa)

*Joel Harrison – guitar*  
*Liberty Ellman – guitar*  
*Christian Howes – violin*  
*Sam Bardfeld – violin*  
*Mat Maneri – viola*  
*Dana Leong – cello*

New album:  
***The Music of Paul Motian***  
(Sunnyside Records, January 2011)



***"I love the concept, the arrangements sound great" — Paul Motian***

"One evening in the late 1990's I was drinking next to bassist Ed Schuller at the now defunct club, Detour. We got to talking about Paul Motian's music, since Ed had played for years in Paul's quintet. One thing led to another- I helped reunite the quintet for a weekend at Yoshi's in Oakland, CA in 2000. It was around that time that I ran into Hans Wendl, who worked with Paul at ECM, and I found myself saying, "Paul's music is so unusual...it seems like great music to arrange for string quartet." Having uttered those words, a spell seemed to be cast. It was a conquest I could not let go of, despite its absurdity. It stuck to me like flypaper. Many revisions later, plus two guitars, here we are.

Paul Motian has written a remarkable number of highly original tunes, especially for his trio with Joe Lovano and Bill Frisell. His singular, under-appreciated sound is at once quizzical, playful, melancholy, and fierce, more suggestion than declaration. I arranged his pieces according to my own vision, yet trying to capture Paul's elusive approach to drumming and writing.

The task was formidable.

It is highly unusual for a string ensemble to function in this way, moving back and forth between spontaneity and formal notation, calling for group and individual solos, as well as all manner of expressive techniques. I could have called on an established string quartet; however, I decided to make a team of some of the most original voices in modern improvised string music, and build things from scratch. There was plenty of trial and error. What to write down? What to leave open? All I can say is, like any respectable jazz project, there is enough left to chance so that each performance is remarkably different.

Through it all, my goals have been clear. I have resisted relying on the received wisdom of rhythm section and soloists. I see the need to elevate composers who are not already part of the jazz canon and bring unusual instrumentation into jazz. I strive to find new ways to balance spontaneity and notation and destroy stylistic barriers. Certain aspects of Paul's sound were obviously unattainable, so I chose pieces that fit this format best and included two tunes closely associated with him- Misterioso, which he often plays with the trio, and Jade Visions, the haunting tone poem that ends the infamous Bill Evans recording, "Sunday at the Village Vanguard", on which Paul plays drums. Beyond all concepts I have striven to make a ravishingly beautiful document of some incredible songs." — Joel Harrison

**SUBTONE**

*concerts*

Steffen Wilde  
Huttenstraße 76  
D-06110 Halle / Germany  
[www.subtone-concerts.de](http://www.subtone-concerts.de)

fon +49-(0)345-80 63 707  
fax +49-(0)3212-1 27 82 57  
mobile fon +49-(0)172-356 27 88  
email [info@subtone-concerts.de](mailto:info@subtone-concerts.de)