Michael Hustedde, violin
January 2019

Michael Hustedde, once a student at Apple Hill, returns to join Apple Hill's resident musicians in performing Five Folk Songs in Counterpoint for String Quartet by Florence Price.

Michael sat down for a chat with Director Lenny Matczynski the other day. Here's what he has to say:

"I started playing violin at age five, after seeing Itzhak Perlman on Sesame Street--I imagine a lot of other kids started music that way, too. It just looked like he was having so much fun and he was so expressive. He'd say, I'm going to play something happy now, and he did, and then he'd say, I'm going to play something sad now, and he did. I'd never seen anything like that. I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky, which has a thriving music education scene, good string teachers, and one of the oldest youth orchestras in the country. I was exposed to some great chamber music as well. I enjoyed playing music, how it made me feel, and I formed an identity as a musician. I had other interests but I had a sense of inevitability--in a good way--that I would be a musician.

"I went to study at Boston University, for my bachelor's with Bayla Keyes, and my master's with Dana Mazurkevich. I couldn't have had better teachers. Bayla taught me how to listen, and Dana taught me how to find my own musical voice.

"I was invited to participate in Apple Hill's Fellowship Program in 2015 and 2016 when I played with the Videri String Quartet, a quartet that performs video game music. It was serendipitous how I came to be in that quartet. I was at a recording session towards the end of my master's degree, and I noticed this violist kept watching me. She came up to me after and said that her quartet was looking for a new violinist and would I be interested in reading with them some time. It turned out to be an instant thing, because they were playing at a convention in San Francisco shortly after that. I said sure, auditioned, and ended up in the quartet. You always look back at these random things and see how they affect the direction your life takes--this recording session led to the Videri Quartet, which led to Apple Hill, and now here I am.

"My experience with the Apple Hill Fellowship Program was fulfilling but intense. It was a struggle, but ultimately that was helpful for the quartet, to work really intensely like that for a couple weeks. Lenny, our coach, pulled out something in my playing I didn't know was there. He spoke in abstract terms, which is how I conceptualize music, rather than just notes and dynamics.

"Having played video game music for a while, I can say that musicians should be flexible and adaptable with what styles they can play, but I do think it's best to be really good at what you do, even if that's just one or two things. I do think having a really good foundation in classical training develops the ears and helps in a lot of settings.

"I've enjoyed getting to know the Apple Hill network. It's neat to see people I know from Boston up here as well. When I auditioned for the New Bedford Symphony, I went into the final round--
which isn't behind a screen--and Jesse [Holstein, concertmaster of NBS and Apple Hill faculty] was like, oh, you're Michael from Apple Hill! It was a neat moment (and I got the job!).

"As a freelance musician, my work is very piecemeal. My quartet, the Denovo Quartet, serves as teaching fellows through Boston Chamber Music Society, which means we teach sectionals at Somerville High School. I give concerts with that quartet, play in a few orchestras, and teach private lessons. You have to switch mindsets quickly--for example, bringing the intensity needed to rehearse with Apple Hill this week is very different from playing in an orchestra.

"Having heard the Apple Hill String Quartet so much as a student, I'm honored--and surprised!--to be asked to play with them now. It's incredible. I'm realizing how quick and adaptable they all are, how they bring thoughtful ideas to the music making, and how they can execute really advanced musical concepts.

"Apple Hill wasn't a summer festival I would have sought out, but after all these little instances added up to bring me here, I can see why people return year after year. The experiences have really enhanced my musicality."

Bio:

Apple Hill alumnus Michael Hustedde, violin, is a native of Lexington, KY and has established a creative presence in Boston as a sought-after soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral player. Described as "tightly articulated, pitch-secure" (Providence Journal), Michael is the principal second violin of the Cape Cod Chamber Orchestra and can also be heard locally with ensembles such as the Boston Pops, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, New Bedford Symphony Orchestra, Marsh Chapel Collegium, Back Bay Chorale, and Orchestra of Indian Hill, among others. In addition to his performance career, he is a Boston Chamber Music Society Teaching Artist, working with young musicians at Somerville High School. He also serves on the music faculty at the Middlesex School in Concord, MA. Michael is an alumnus of Apple Hill's Fellowship Ensemble Program, part of the Summer Chamber Music Workshop.