

Founded in 2009 by musical director [Peter Blanchette](#), HVGO is a true avant-garde orchestra, comprised of twenty talented, enthusiastic, acoustic and electric guitarists from widely varied traditions. HVGO creates new and beautiful music that could only come from such an eclectic melange, inspiring musicians to work together who might otherwise never collaborate. HVGO captivates audiences with music of significant contemporary and legacy composers whose works Blanchette has arranged to exploit the unique tonal characteristics and strengths of the ensemble. HVGO is a resident performance group at the [Northampton Center for the Arts](#).

HVGO packs venues from classical music halls to rock clubs to outdoor shows at farmers' markets. Highlights of the HVGO repertoire include Blanchette's "Fantasy for Oud and Electric Guitar Orchestra," based on 19th century Armenian oud master Tatyos Eksersyan, Blanchette's pulsing arrangements of Bartok's Romanian Folk Dances, Sz. 56, BB 68, Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* (originally for 8 cellos), unforgettable excerpts from Philip Glass's opera *Satyagraha: M.K. Gandhi in South Africa*, and uncannily colorful arrangements of Led Zeppelin & Lady Gaga. In 2013-14 HVGO adds to its wildly diverse playlists with traditional Scottish dance music, based on the violin music collections of Neil Gow, more Philip Glass pieces, songs by The Smiths, and instrumental arrangements of 90s Saudi popular music of Saleh Khairi.

In 2010, HVGO's [debut album](#) won Springfield Republican's annual "LiveWire" award, "one of the best CD's of Western Mass." In 2011, Blanchette was named "Outstanding Individual Artist," by New England Public Radio for his community impact with HVGO. In 2011, HVGO attracted the attention of Sundance- award winning filmmaker Jesse Epstein, who spent a year filming HVGO, interviewing players, & following Blanchette on tour. The film is now in post-production, with Malcolm Pullinger ("Following Sean," "Winnebago Man") crafting it into a feature-length documentary about grass roots art in America.

In 2012, HVGO began receiving state cultural funding from the highly competitive Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Portfolio Fund. HVGO is also funded by an annual distribution from the Frank Lucchesi Fund of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. Also in 2012-13, HVGO began a special project "Target Holyoke – Out of Residence" innovative because it draws working class students from one of Massachusetts' most economically-challenged communities to participate in a successful music ensemble, & learn uncompromising orchestral arrangements of Western art music through an innovative teaching method that employs rock-n-roll's demonstrative style.