

The Wister Quartet

Nancy Bean, violin
Davyd Booth, violin

Pamela Fay, viola
Lloyd Smith, cello

The Program

Joseph Haydn	String Quartet in <i>E♭</i> Major, Op. 33, No. 2 ("The Joke")
W. A. Mozart	String Quartet in <i>B♭</i> Major, K. 458 ("The Hunt")
Claude Debussy	String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 10

This program is sponsored in part by Robert W. Wynn,
in memory of his wife, Phyllis.

Haydn's "Joke" quartet was nicknamed by his publisher, not by Haydn. The humor especially in the last movement's ending suggests the idea. The six Op. 33 quartets were written in 1781 and dedicated to Grand Duke Paul of Russia. They are also known as "The Scherzi" because in place of the traditional Minuet movement is a Scherzo (literal translation, "joke").

Mozart's "Hunt" quartet is one of a series of six written the same year, 1781, and dedicated to "my dear friend Joseph Haydn." Mozart always claimed that he learned to write string quartets from Haydn's examples. The rollicking first movement gives the reason for the nickname, but there is much more to this work than hunting music. A gracious and thoughtful Menuetto is followed by a slow movement, one of the most eloquent and moving ever written. The finale is light and cheerful and we are impressed by the richness of Mozart's inventive powers.

Debussy was a mature 31 years of age when he wrote his string quartet. He apparently delighted in breaking as many harmonic rules imposed by his teachers as he could manage, but the leaps he made into overwhelmingly gorgeous sound and expression overcame any criticism, which was heaped upon him ("unplayable . . . unintelligible") at the first hearings of the quartet. We have indeed come far as instrumentalists, interpreters — and listeners!