

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) String Quartet in A major, K. 464 -

Allegro

Menuetto-Trio

Andante

Allegro non troppo

This A major quartet is one of the six quartets that Mozart dedicated to Haydn and which are the result of a wonderfully productive interaction between the two composers. In the course of the five years from 1768 to 1772, his 40th year, Haydn published three sets of quartets the Op 9, 17 and 20, in which the older Divertimento form evolved into the true classical string quartet with free and independent parts among the four instruments. The following year, 1773, the 21-year old Mozart wrote a set of six quartets, his so-called Viennese quartets (K. 169 – 173, now little performed), which incorporated many of the features and even some of the themes of Haydn's works.

But then, curiously, neither composer produced another quartet for 10 years. Eventually, in 1782 Haydn announced his set of six Op 33 quartets and they fired up Mozart, so that between 1782 and 1785 he worked unusually hard at his own set of six quartets. These "*six sons... the fruit of a long and laborious study*" he dedicated to "*his very dear friend*" Haydn. Haydn in turn after hearing the last three of these quartets said to Leopold, Mozart's father, "*I say to you before God, on my word of honour, your son is the greatest composer whom I know personally or by name; he has taste and the greatest skill in composition as well*".

The A major quartet is one of these latter three, all of which benefit from the learning process that Mozart had gone through with the first three. Leopold found them "lighter", with Mozart's art concealing their extraordinary artfulness. Beethoven too was impressed, especially by this A major quartet, of which he is reported as saying: "*That's a work! That's where Mozart said to the world: Behold what I might have done for you if the time were right!*"