If you are coming to this Mozart quartet for the first time you might be put off, or at least puzzled, by the name that it has acquired. *Dissonance* does not seem the sort of thing you would seek out without good reason. Are we about to hear the Buckley's Mixture of Mozart quartets, something that sounds awful but is good for us? No need to worry. In the context of eighteenth-century musical language, a dissonance is simply a collection of sounds that audiences have learned to hear as unstable; something that leaves us with a feeling of suspense and the need to move to something more stable. What Mozart manages to do in the opening Adagio, and this is the source of the quartet's name, is to stretch out this sense of suspense for a significant period, not allowing us to know quite where we are going, but at the same time, suggesting that this is a bit of a game and he will make things clear, all in good time. This he does with the arrival of the main C major Allegro theme. And how much more effective this relatively simple theme is after the searching of the opening measures.

The quartet is the last of a set of six such works that Mozart wrote between 1782 and 1785 and published in 1785 with a dedication to Haydn. There is a great deal of hyperbole from both composers regarding these works, but shorn of the exaggerated language expected in the 18th century for such purposes, there is clear mutual admiration on display. Mozart wrote this group of works in response to the ground-breaking Op. 33 quartets of Haydn and admitted that they were *"the fruits of a long and laborious endeavour."* In the flowery published dedication, full of metaphors of sons and fathers, Mozart recognizes the importance of the older man's works as models to be emulated. In his turn, Haydn, after hearing three of the quartets, including today's work, gave Mozart's father, Leopold, his famous opinion of the younger man: *"Before God and as an honest man I tell you that your son is the greatest composer known to me either in person or by name. He has taste and what is more, the most profound knowledge of composition."* Now these are Leopold's words, reporting what Haydn had said in a letter to Mozart's sister, but there is no reason to doubt the general tenor of what was said. In a wonderful example of intergenerational challenge, Haydn acknowledged his opinion of Mozart's compositions in the sincerest way possible by taking his own subsequent works to new heights in emulation of these six quartets.

The background of R Murray Schafer's 2nd String Quartet, sub-titled *Waves*, is to be found in the World Soundscape Project (WSP), a research endeavour founded by Schafer at Simon Fraser University in 1969. This was *"concerned with raising public awareness of sound, documenting environmental sound and its changing character and establishing the concept and practice of soundscape design as an alternative to noise pollution."* In the score the composer makes the connection explicit: *"In the course of the WSP we recorded and analysed ocean waves on both Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Canada. The recurrent pattern of waves is always asymmetrical but we have noted that the duration from crest to crest usually falls between 6 and 11 seconds."* This is translated into music with an elastic rhythmic pattern of varying bar lengths, with the aim more generally of giving *"the quartet a liquid quality in which everything is constantly dissolving and*

*flowing into everything else."* The work was composed in 1976 and given its first performance in Vancouver the same year by the Purcell Quartet. It won the first Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music in 1978.

*"I am taking the liberty of writing to you to ask if you would be willing to compose one, two or three new quartets. I shall be delighted to pay you whatever you judge appropriate."* The writer is the Russian Prince, Nicolas Galitzin, who was an ardent music lover and amateur cellist; the letter from St Petersburg is dated November 9th 1822. Beethoven accepted the commission and suggested a fee of 50 ducats per quartet. Op. 130 is the third quartet of the group, and in spite of Beethoven's optimism that he could finish the works in a relatively short time, it was July 1825 before he told Galitizin that this work was *"nearly finished,"* which was more than a slight exaggeration. In January of the next year a quartet led by Ignaz Schuppanzigh finally rehearsed the work in Beethoven's apartment. Karl Holz, the second violinist of the group, and for a time Beethoven's secretary and copyist, left reminiscences of the occasion, emphasising the problems they had with the music. He says that Beethoven used to sit between the two violins, because although *"he could no longer hear low-pitched sounds, his ear still caught the higher notes …"* He adds that Schuppanzigh *"had quite a struggle with the difficult first violin part, at which Beethoven broke into peals of laughter."* The Viennese publisher Artaria paid Beethoven 80 ducats for the work, but it was six months before it appeared in print. The first public performance of the quartet was in March 1826, and the reception was mixed. At this stage the work concluded with a long complex movement that we know as the *Große Fuge – the Great Fugue* – and it was this, especially, that caused the audience difficulties. Beethoven was eventually persuaded, or persuaded himself, to write an alternative last movement – the Allegro that we hear today – and to allow the Fugue to be issued as a separate, one movement work under its own opus number (133). And that has presented performers ever since with the dilemma of which version to use. Those who insist on the fugue as the composer's original intention argue that the new finale does not match the weight of the previous movements, but Lewis Lockwood has countered that very effectively: the new subtle and intricate movement *"fits well with earlier movements of the quartet … and is a beautifully proportioned closing movement that distributes the weight of the whole work back generously towards its predecessors."*

As of January 1st this year, the space probe Voyager 1, which was launched by NASA in September 1977, was 13.489 billion miles from earth. On board there are two golden records containing a time capsule representing life and culture on earth; included as the last item is a recording of the Cavatina from the Beethoven quartet on today's programme. The potential for a performance of this music 13 billion miles into space seems somehow ridiculous and at the same time awe-inspiring. Do I hear more peals of Beethovenian laughter at the idea?

*John Mayo*