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### Fine Arts Quartet

Musicians, like the rest of us, delight in celebrating round-number anniversaries. The Fine Arts Quartet, feting its own 60th year, featured music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (250 this year) and Dmitri Shostakovich (100) at Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center on Thursday.

The group gave Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 1 a tight and skilled performance, demonstrating an excellent sense of ensemble from the gossamer-light scherzo to the acerbic harmonies of the final allegro. The quartet captured the composer's sense of humor, though a lack of intensity detracted from the work's emotional depth.

National Symphony Orchestra principal violist Daniel Foster joined the quartet for Mozart's String Quintet in D, K 593. Foster blended in seamlessly, matching tone, timbre and style with violist Yuri Gandelsman and the rest of the quartet: violinists Ralph Evans and Efim Boico and cellist Wolfgang Laufer. It's amazing how much a single violist can add to a string quartet, and Foster's presence brought the ensemble to near orchestral proportions in this lively and dramatic performance.

Bernard Herrmann's music was a quirky interjection of programming amid the birthday boys. "Echoes" is one of the few pieces Herrmann, most famous for his score of Alfred Hitchcock's film "Psycho," churned out for the concert stage. The 20-minute composition was pleasant and dark but didn't offer much in the way of development or forward motion. Despite this challenge, the Fine Arts Quartet skirted boredom by infusing the performance with enthusiasm.

-- Gail Wein